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Vintage Ro-Ko school Aussies in Sydney

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Modi govt planned $3.9B LIC bailout for Adani: Washington Post

NEW DELHI, 25 OCT

A Washington Post investigation has alleged that the Modi government orchestrated a $3.9-billion rescue plan for billionaire Gautam Adani's debt-laden conglomerate, directing the state-owned Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) to invest heavily in Adani Group bonds and equities. The report, based on internal documents and interviews with officials, claims the plan was finalised in May 2025 through coordination among the Union finance ministry, its Department of Financial Services (DFS), LIC, and NITI Aayog.

According to the Post, the strategy aimed to "signal confidence" in Adani's businesses and attract other investors after the group faced a global credibility crisis following US corruption and fraud charges and the 2023 Hindenburg report alleging stock manipulation.

- The documents reportedly show that LIC financed a Rs 5,000 crore bond issue for Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) in May this year.

The documents reportedly show that LIC financed a $585-million (Rs 5,000 crore) bond issue for Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) in May this year, fully subscribing to the 15-year non-convertible debenture (NCD) issue with a 7.75% coupon rate. The DFS and NITI Aayog, the Post said, viewed Adani as a "visionary entrepreneur" whose infrastructure empire was critical to India's economic ambitions.

Critics, however, warned that the move exposed LIC's policyholders — millions of low- and middle-income Indians — to high-risk corporate exposure. The report noted that international banks had hesitated to lend to Adani amid ongoing investigations by the US Department of Justice (DoJ) and Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). The SEC recently said Indian authorities had failed to act on requests to serve summons to Adani executives.

The Post said the finance ministry proposed that LIC diversify its $3.4-billion bond investments into Adani Ports and Adani Green Energy, which were seen as offering higher returns than 10-year government securities. Officials also suggested increasing LIC's equity in Ambuja Cements and Adani Green Energy, while requesting an expedited approval process due to the "time-sensitive" nature of the deals. *—Agencies*

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Depression in Bay of Bengal to turn into severe cyclone

AMARAVATI, 25 OCT

A depression over the Bay of Bengal is expected to intensify into a severe cyclonic storm before making landfall on India's east coast, meteorologists warned on Saturday. The India Meteorological Department said the weather system will strengthen into a deep depression by Sunday and develop into a cyclonic storm named Montha by Monday morning. It's forecast to become a severe cyclonic storm by Tuesday morning, crossing the Andhra Pradesh coast near Kakinada that evening with winds reaching 110 kmph. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has placed officials on high alert and directed preparations to prevent casualties and damage. Authorities have been instructed to evacuate coastal residents, monitor reservoir levels and keep disaster response teams ready. *—PTI*

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Late astrophysicist Jayant Narlikar wins Vigyan Ratna

NEW DELHI, 25 OCT

Renowned astrophysicist Jayant Naralikar, who passed away in May at the age of 86, has been awarded the Vigyan Ratna Puraskar, India's premier science accolade. Naralikar famously challenged the Big Bang theory, proposing alongside British astronomer Fred Hoyle that "the universe had always existed with continuous creation of new matter into infinity". The government also announced eight Vigyan Shri awards for 2025, recognising the achievements of various scientists in fields like Agricultural Science and Space Technology. Furthermore, the Vigyan Team award was given to the CSIR Aroma Mission Team for their Lavender Mission in Jammu and Kashmir. *—PTI*

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Air India flight returns to Nagpur after bird strike

NEW DELHI, 25 OCT

A potential disaster was averted on Friday evening when an Air India flight from Nagpur to Delhi had to make an emergency landing shortly after take-off due to a suspected bird strike. Flight AI-466 departed Nagpur Airport at 6.38pm, but the pilot quickly identified unusual vibrations in one engine and suspected a bird hit. He promptly informed Air Traffic Control and returned to Nagpur, where the aircraft, carrying over 170 passengers, landed safely. While passengers experienced panic, no injuries were reported. Engineers inspected the plane, and the airline refunded tickets while making alternative travel arrangements. Airport authorities are conducting a runway inspection to avoid future occurrences. *—PTI*

EC to begin pan-India SIR starting with 15 states next week

SIR likely in poll-bound Assam, TN, Kerala, WB

NEW DELHI, 25 OCT

Election Commission is likely to roll out the first of pan-India Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of voters' list next week beginning with "10 to 15 states", including those going to polls next year, officials said Saturday.

Assam, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala and West Bengal will to polls in 2026 and they are amongst the states where the voters' list cleanup exercise will begin first.

The poll authority is likely to announce the first phase of SIR middle of next week, in which as many as "10 to 15 states" would be included, officials said.

The EC will not hold the electoral roll cleanup exercise in states where local body elections are taking place or are due, as the grassroots poll machinery is busy with it and may not be able to focus on SIR, they said

The SIR in such states will be held in later phases.

The voters' list cleanup exercise has concluded in Bihar where the final list with nearly 7.42 crore names was published on 30 September.

The last SIR in states will serve as the cut-off date **PHOTO: PTI**

Biahr will go to polls in two phases, on 6 and 11 November, and the counting will take place on 14 November.

The Commission has already held two conferences with state chief electoral officers (CEOs) to firm up the SIR rollout roadmap. Several CEOs have already put the voter lists published after their last SIR on their websites. The website of the Delhi CEO has the 2008 voter list when the last intensive revision took place in the national capital.

In Uttarakhand, the last SIR took place in 2006, and that year's electoral roll is now on the state CEO website.

The last SIR in states will serve as the cut-off date, just as the 2003 voter list of Bihar was used by the EC. Most states had the last SIR of the voter list between 2002 and 2004. Most have nearly completed the mapping of current electors with the voters according to the last SIR held in their respective states or Union territories. *—PTI*

2 Aus players molested in MP amid Women's World Cup tour

INDORE, 25 OCT

Two Australian women cricketers taking part in the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup were allegedly stalked, and one was molested, by a man on a motorcycle in Indore on Thursday morning, police confirmed on Saturday.

The players, walking towards a café near Khajrana Road, immediately contacted their team security officer, Danny Simmons, sharing their live location with local security liaisons. Sub-Inspector Nidhi Raghuvanshi said the man inappropriately touched one of the players before fleeing. Assistant Commissioner of Police Himani Mishra arrived promptly, recorded statements from the cricketers, and registered an FIR under sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita relating to stalking and outraging a woman's modesty.

The accused, identified as Akil Khan, was apprehended on Friday after a bystander noted his motorcycle registration number. Police confirmed that Khan has previous criminal cases registered against him, and an investigation is ongoing.

The Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association (MPCA) expressed "deep pain and shock" over the incident and extended "sincere apologies" to the Australian team, stating that the disorderly act "cast a shadow over the city's image." While praising the police for their swift response, the MPCA emphasised examining whether the players had requested security for movements outside their hotel or if the movement occurred without prior security arrangements.

The accused, Akil Khan, was apprehended after a bystander noted his motorcycle registration number **PHOTO: PTI**

Cricket Australia confirmed the incident, saying their team security reported the matter to police, who are handling the investigation. State Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya termed the event "shameful," urging strict action against the accused and highlighting the incident's impact on the country's "prestige." *—PTI*

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Pakistan closes airspace ahead of India's military drill near Sir Creek

NEW DELHI, 25 OCT

Pakistan has restricted several flight corridors over its central and southern regions days before India launches a major tri-service military exercise near the Sir Creek border. The airspace curbs, announced through a Notice to Airmen (Notam) for 28–29 October, coincide with India's planned Exercise Trishul from 30 October to 10 November.

Though Islamabad has not explained the move, analysts believe it reflects concern over the scale of India's upcoming manoeuvres or hints at a parallel military drill. India's Trishul exercise, involving the Army, Navy and Air Force, aims to showcase joint combat readiness, coordination, and self-reliance across land, sea, and air. The Defence Ministry said troops from Southern Command will conduct operations in creek, desert, and coastal zones, including amphibious and multi-domain missions.

Satellite imagery indicates the exercise area extends up to 28,000 feet, signalling one of the largest coordinated operations in recent years.

The exercise follows Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's sharp warning to Islamabad against "any misadventure" in the Sir Creek region, a sensitive estuary dividing Gujarat and Pakistan's Sindh province.

Strategic experts say Pakistan's airspace restrictions underline heightened vigilance as India intensifies preparedness along the border following Operation Sindoor. *—Agencies*

Tejashwi's hints at Muslim DyCM in Bihar

PATNA, 25 OCT

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader Tejashwi Yadav claimed the NDA government has lost public trust and hinted at a Muslim deputy chief minister in the Mahagathbandhan (Grand Alliance) if elected in Bihar. In an exclusive interview given to Mint, Yadav, 35, said the alliance is united and ready to build a "Viksit Bihar", promising to tackle unemployment, migration, and deliver on schemes for women and youth.

Chief Minister Nitish Kumar accused opposition leaders of treating the Muslim community as a "vote bank", asserting that under the NDA, minorities have received proper representation in government, education, and welfare initiatives, including pensions and support for women entrepreneurs.

Meanwhile, LJP (RV) chief Chirag Paswan and BJP spokesperson Syed Shanawaz Hussain criticised the RJD for failing to announce a Muslim CM or Deputy CM candidate, citing the 2005 Bihar polls when Ram Vilas Paswan had proposed a Muslim CM, which RJD rejected. They claimed the party continues to consider the Muslim community primarily as a vote bank.

Bihar votes in two phases on 6 and 11 November, with results due on 14 November. The Mahagathbandhan includes the RJD, Congress, and five other parties challenging the JD(U)-BJP-led NDA. *—Agencies*

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5 children with thalassemia test HIV+ve in J'khand

CHAIBASA, 25 OCT

Five children suffering from thalassemia have tested HIV-positive in Jharkhand's Chaibasa, sparking alarm over possible contaminated blood transfusions at the local government hospital.

The development follows allegations by the family of a seven-year-old thalassemia patient who claimed their child contracted HIV after receiving blood from the Chaibasa district blood bank. The child, who had undergone around 25 transfusions, tested positive for HIV over a week ago.

A five-member medical team from Ranchi, led by Dr Dinesh Kumar, Director of Health Services, inspected the Sadar Hospital, the blood bank, and the paediatric ICU ward on Saturday. "Initial findings suggest contaminated blood may have been transfused to a thalassemia patient. Some discrepancies were found in the blood bank, and officials have been directed to rectify them," Dr Kumar said.

District Civil Surgeon Dr Sushanto Majhee confirmed the cases but cautioned against premature conclusions, noting that infection could also result from other sources, such as contaminated needles.

West Singhbhum district currently records 515 HIV-positive patients and 56 thalassemia cases. The probe team will now trace and test blood donors whose samples were used in the transfusions before submitting a final report. *—PTI*

Veteran actor Satish Shah dies at 74

MUMBAI, 25 OCT

Veteran Bollywood actor Satish Shah, celebrated for his impeccable comic timing in classics such as 'Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro', 'Main Hoon Na', and the cult sitcom 'Sarabhai vs Sarabhai', passed away on Saturday. He was 74.

Shah died at his residence in Bandra East in the afternoon, his aide of over 30 years, Ramesh Kadatala, told PTI. A close associate said the actor had been battling kidney-related complications following a transplant three months ago. Born on 25 June, 1951, in Mumbai, Shah enjoyed a prolific career spanning four decades across theatre, film, and television. Known for his sharp wit and natural flair for comedy, he became one of India's most beloved character actors, featuring in memorable roles in films such as 'Maalamaal', 'Hero Hiralal', 'Kal Ho Naa Ho', and numerous television hits. He was married to Madhu Shah. *—PTI*

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TUNNEL ROAD ROW

HC questions State govt, seeks report on trees to be cut in Lalbagh

BENGALURU, 25 OCT

The Karnataka High Court instructed the State government to apprise it about what trees it planned to cut for the upcoming tunnel road project.

A bench comprising of Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice CM Poonacha was hearing the matter based on a PIL filed by actor Prakash Belawadi challenging the project. Belawadi was represented by BJP MP Tejasvi Surya.

The petition questioned the lack of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the project, absence of consultation with the Bengaluru Metropolitan Land Transport Authority (BMLTA), and raised concerns over the Detailed Project Report (DPR), particularly the tunnel alignment passing beneath the historic Lalbagh Rock. Surya argued that around 6.5 acres of Lalbagh land could be impacted by the project. He also cautioned that the 3,000-million-year-old Lalbagh Rock, recognised as a National Geological Monument, faces serious threat due to the proposed alignment.

The Court also sought input from the Geological Survey of India on the Environmental Impact Assessment. *—Salar News*

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DKS lashes out at Tejasvi for opposing Tunnel Road

Says Lalbagh won't be affected as the tunnel road is underground

BENGALURU, 25 OCT

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar slammed BJP MP Tejasvi Surya for opposing the Tunnel Road project. Shivakumar said the State government is not acquiring any land but using only a small parcel of land near Christ College and said that Lalbagh wouldn't be affected by the massive project as it would go underground.

"It (tunnel road) will go inside (underground). At one side, we will utilise a portion of land temporarily. We will neatly convert it into park (once the project is over). We have to dig it inside. It cannot be done outside," Shivakumar said after his Walk with Bengaluru initiative in Gandhi Park, Yeshwantpur.

Surya has vocally opposed the Tunnel Road project, citing environmental concerns and lack of proper planning. However, Shivakumar asserted that he will not yield to Surya at any point in time.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar interacts with citizens during his 'Bengaluru Nadige' at Gandhi Park on Saturday *PHOTO: X @DKShivakumar*

Alleging that the BJP could not do any good work during their tenure, Shivakumar called Surya an "empty vessel".

Willing to acquire land wherever JD(S) leader HD Kumaraswamy wants, if he brings in industries, says DKS

"Tunnels are bore beneath the earth and they don't show up above. We can't stop infrastructural projects because someone doesn't want it. If tunnels are bad, why are they making tunnel projects in Mumbai and Delhi? Tejaswi Surya is an empty vessel and he hasn't done anything for Bengaluru," Shivakumar said.

Shivakumar alleged that despite being an MP, Surya could not get even Rs 10 sanctioned by PM Narendra Modi for the State.

"What has he done with the MPLAD funds? What was his plan of action when his party's government was there? Why couldn't he sort out traffic problem? Why he couldn't call tender for waste management? Why couldn't he widen the road, build flyover? He couldn't do anything," Shivakumar alleged.

Pointing to the cables hanging overhead menacingly across Bengaluru, the DyCM asked, "Why couldn't they (BJP) remove them? They joined hands with mafias and spoilt Bengaluru. Because of them Karnataka was ruined, so people gave us 140 seats (in the 224-member assembly)."

Asked about BJP's threat to cancel the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) if it came to power, he said, "It is not in their destiny to come to power and change the GBA. If they don't want GBA, let them boycott the upcoming elections."

'HDK, STOP HIT AND RUNS AND DEBATE ME'

Speaking to reporters at the City Civil Court, Shivakumar asked Union Minister and JD(S) leader HD Kumaraswamy to stop the "hit and run" criticisms about State government's move to allow conversions of B-Khata properties to A-Khata and come for an "open debate".

> **This tunnel road, planned from Hebbal to Silk Board, is a project meant for the rich, paid for by the rest of us**
>
> -Tejasvi Surya, BJP MP in July

> **Yes this is for rich, those who have money**
>
> -DK Shivakumar, Deputy Chief Minister

"If Kumaraswamy has evidence of his allegations, let him present it before the people of the state. He has been given a position, let him present the facts before the people instead of threatening with pen drives and things like that," the KPCC President said.

"We are asking people to correct their property documents so that they can get loan from banks, so that we can provide good facilities to people. We discussed on this in detail," Shivakumar said on the B-Khata issue.

Asked about Kumaraswamy's statement that they will form the government after 2.5 years, he said, "I have heard this many a time. His party has come down to 18 seats under his leadership and it will fall to 8-9 seats in the next election."

—Salar News with agencies

BASKING IN THE LIGHT

A horticulture worker sprays water to the plants at Rose Garden in front of Central Library at Cubbon Park on Saturday. DyCM DK Shivakumar will visit the park on Sunday *PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD*

Siddaramaiah will complete five-year term: Yathindra

MYSURU, 25 OCT

- Yathindra said he will not speak about his statement in Belagavi, where he urged his father to groom PWD Minister Satish Jarkiholi as a successor

Congress MLC Yathindra Siddaramaiah on Saturday said his father, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, will complete his full five-year term in office. Speaking to press in Mysuru on Saturday, Yathindra said he will not speak about his statement in Belagavi, where he urged his father to mentor PWD Minister Satish Jarkiholi as a successor.

The party leaders asked me not to speak about the issue, Yathindra said, because such issues should be discussed at party level, he said.

Yathindra added that the "November revolution" was merely gossip.

"November revolution is just speculation. There is no such discussion in our party," he said.

Asked whether his father would complete his term, he said, "In the present situation, he will complete the five-year term."

Siddaramaiah has consistently maintained that he will serve a full five-year term, even as speculation persists that his Deputy DK Shivakumar could succeed him in November.

After the Congress won the Assembly elections in May 2023, there was intense competition between Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar for the Chief Minister's post. At the time, there were reports of a compromise under a "rotational Chief Minister" formula.

—Salar News

D'sthala burials probe: SIT summons activists

MANGALURU, 25 OCT

The SIT probing allegations of multiple burials at Dharmasthala has issued summons to three activists--Mahesh Shetty Thimarody, T Jayanth, and Girish Mattannavar--requiring their appearance on Monday.

Failure to comply will result in arrest warrants, as the probe deepens into potential perjury and evidence tampering, police sources said.

The SIT investigation has come to a decisive stage and nearing completion, according to a senior official of the SIT.

The case originated in August 2025 when a former sanitation worker at the temple from 1995 to 2014, filed a complaint alleging the secret burial of over 200 unidentified bodies on temple premises between 2002 and 2014.

He claimed the remains included victims of accidents, murders, and suspicious deaths, buried without autopsies or police reports to conceal irregularities. Amid public scrutiny, the State government then formed an SIT under Pronab Mohanty.

Investigations revealed the complainant's close ties to the three activists, all linked to the ongoing Justice for Sowjanya campaign--a decade-long push for resolution in the 2012 rape and murder of teenager Sowjanya in Udupi.

The SIT has claimed that Mattannavar has orchestrated a smear campaign to defame temple head D Veerendra Heggade. *—PTI*

NO RELIGION PROMOTES HATRED: CM

BENGALURU, 25 OCT

- CM said that people should uphold coexistence and harmony. Later, in Belagavi, he said that the State has written to the Centre to rename the Belagavi airport after Veer Rani Chennamma

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said that education was key to eliminating communal inequality.

"No religion promotes hatred," he said while inaugurating the Darul Quran Campus organised by JEU Group of Institutes in City. "Education is key to this realisation."

He added that education was essential for everyone, irrespective caste, creed or religion.

"Education is vital for a life of self-respect. Dr. BR Ambedkar has stated that education is necessary to break free from social shackles," he said. "We are all Indians first, and only then Hindus, Muslims, or Christians."

Expressing gratitude, he noted that the government, in collaboration with Azim Premji's Wipro, is providing eggs to school children six days a week.

Among others, the guests of honour included AICC Secretary Mansoor Ali Khan, Chairman of State Waqf Board Syed Ali Al-Hussaini Ali Baba, MLAs NA Haris and Rizwan Arshad, and MP Nasir Hussain.

—Salar News

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah with AICC Secretary Mansoor Ali Khan during the inauguration of the Darul Quran Campus in City on Saturday *PHOTO: SALAR*

2 from Kerala die in head on collision near Gundlupet

MYSURU, 25 OCT

Two passengers from Kerala were killed on the spot and three others injured when their car collided head-on with a tipper truck near Gundlupet in Chamarajanagar early Saturday. The accident occurred on the national highway near Madapatna Gate in Gundlupet taluk. Police identified the deceased as Basheer Karimchori, 53, and Naseema Basheer, 42. The injured — Mohammed Shafi, 32; Jaseera, 28; and Mohammed Hanan, 3 — are residents of Kalpetta, Kerala. The car was travelling from Mysuru towards Kerala when it rammed into the oncoming tipper. The tipper driver fled after the crash. Begur Police seized both vehicles, provided first aid to the injured, and admitted them to a hospital. *—Salar News*

Two tenth-grade girls missing in Kolar since Friday

KOLAR, 25 OCT

Two girls studying in the tenth standard at a high school in Narasapur in the State have gone missing since Friday morning. The girls reportedly left their homes under the pretext of going to school but did not return in the evening. Concerned parents rushed to the school only to discover that the girls had not attended. After a fruitless search at relatives' homes, they reported the matter to the Kolar Women's Police Station late that evening.

The parents initially decided to look for their daughters throughout the night before lodging a formal complaint. However, by this morning, they officially reported the missing girls to the police, Saraswathamma, PSI at the Kolar Women's Police Station said.

This incident recalls a similar case from Mulbagal, where two girls, aged 14 and 11, also disappeared under the guise of heading to school. They were later found wandering in various locations, including Kolar, after their parents reported them. The girls were eventually located and safely returned late on Friday. *—Salar News*

Cylinder blast in KR Puram kills woman

BENGALURU/MYSURU, 25 OCT

An LPG blast in City's KR Puram area killed an elderly woman and injured three other sustained injuries in a cooking gas cylinder blast at KR Puram on Saturday morning, police said.

According to police, the incident occurred at Triveni Nagar.

Due to the blast, the building collapsed while some houses in the neighbourhood were also damaged, police said. Authorities promptly rushed to the site to rescue people.

2 DIE IN MYSURU GAS LEAKAGE

Two sisters died due to LPG leakage from the gas geyser on Saturday morning.

According to police, Gulfam, 23, and her sister Simran Taj, 20 died in the bathroom after inhaling the LPG gas. Police said the geyser emitted the gas but did not catch fire.

When the women did not come out of the washroom for very long time, their father Altaf grew suspicious and forced open the door only to find his daughters lying unconscious. Although the family rushed them to a nearby hospital, doctors declared them dead on arrival. *—PTI*

An LPG cylinder blast at Triveni Layout at KR Puram brought down a house, killing an old lady, in Bengaluru on Saturday *PHOTO: SALAR*

SUSPECTING AFFAIR

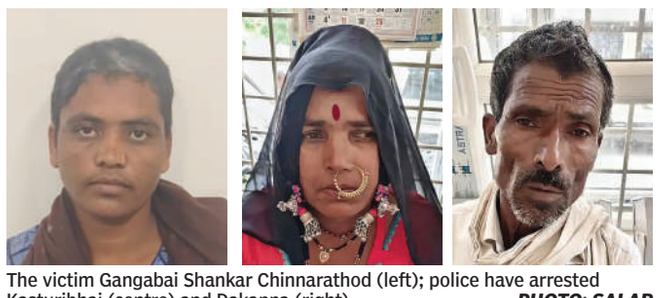
Mob cuts woman's hair, throws chilli powder

YADGIR, 25 OCT

A mob allegedly cut a woman's hair, tore her clothes and forcibly applied lime on her head and threw chili powder on her in Chamanal Tanda of Shahapur taluk in Yadgir district. The miscreants, which included some of her extended family, claimed that the woman was having an affair with her son-in-law.

The Kembhavi police have arrested two people while more than 11 people have been booked.

On the night of 16 October, around 8 pm, while the victim - Gangabai Shankar Chinnarathod - was at home with her husband and nephew, the group came to the house armed with iron rods. They physically and verbally abused her.



The victim Gangabai Shankar Chinnarathod (left); police have arrested Kasturibhai (centre) and Dakappa (right) *PHOTO: SALAR*

They allegedly cut her hair with scissors, applied lime on her head, tore her clothes, and physically attacked her.

When she tried to escape, they threw chili powder on her. Her husband and nephew shouted for help, and with the assistance of local residents, Chinnarathod managed to escape.

The survivor lodged a complaint alleging life threats against 11 people, including 6 women.

The woman said in her complaint that she would often visit her aunt's house due to health issues. Her son-in-law, Anil Ramu Rathod, would often take her there.

However, the accused believing something else was afoot insulted her, saying, "You have brought disgrace by running away with your son-in-law."

Main accused Vijaykumar Kishan Rathod (a rowdy-sheeter) and about ten others are suspected to be hiding in Mumbai and Pune, according to police.

—Salar News

Ashoka flays govt after woman dies due to pothole

BENGALURU, 25 OCT

Opposition Leader R Ashoka came down on the Congress after a 26-year-old bank employee died after she was allegedly run over by a speeding truck when she fell off a pillion of a motorcycle.

The accident occurred on Friday on the Huskur–Makali road, which is alleged to be in poor condition and filled with potholes, they said.

According to police on Saturday, the deceased Priyanka Kumari Poonia was travelling with her brother, Naresh Kumar, who was riding the motorcycle.

He applied the brakes suddenly after a car in front slowed down, allegedly due to a pothole on the road.

At that moment, a truck coming from the opposite direction hit the motorcycle's handlebars, causing Kumar to lose control of the vehicle "because of the poor road conditions", as stated in the complaint.

The truck then ran over Priyanka while Kumar escaped with minor injuries.

"Every pothole in Bengaluru is a symbol of the Congress' corruption, apathy, and arrogance," Ashoka said on X. "A young woman in Bengaluru has lost her life - not because of fate, but because of a pothole!" *—Salar News with agencies*

GBA workers tar a road inside Cubbon Park in Bengaluru on Saturday *PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD*

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

RJD women's wing head joins BJP ahead of Bihar polls

PATNA, 25 OCT

Former RJD state women's wing chief Pratima Kushwaha joined BJP on Saturday, alleging that grassroots leaders are not respected in the opposition party. BJP state President Dilip Jaiswal welcomed her, claiming several RJD and Congress leaders are joining the saffron party due to "nepotism and dynastic politics" in their ranks. She said RJD is no longer the party it was under Lalu Prasad Yadav, alleging it now "stands deeply fragmented" along with the family heading it. She criticised Tejashwi Yadav's claims on providing jobs to Bihar's youth, alleging the party gave jobs "by taking away their land" in an apparent reference to the alleged land-for-job scam. Jaiswal claimed NDA will form a government in Bihar with two-thirds majority. *—PTI*

Plaint filed against Mizoram CM for poll code breach

AIZAWL, 25 OCT

The Mizo National Front (MNF) has filed a complaint with the Election Commission against Chief Minister Lalduhoma for allegedly violating the model code of conduct during campaigning for the Dampa bypoll, an election official said on Saturday. The MNF accused Lalduhoma of announcing a Rs 700-crore water project and promising turmeric processing machines to farmers during a campaign in Reiek village in Mamit district. The party also alleged that ruling Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) MLA and CM's adviser, Dr Lorrain Lalpekliana Chinzah, held a free medical camp after the code came into effect. Officials said the complaints are under investigation. The Dampa bypoll will be held on 11 November, with counting on 14 November. *—PTI*

MNS wants probe into Mumbai's irregular voter roll

THANE, 25 OCT

The Maharashtra Navnirman Sena has urged Navi Mumbai authorities to investigate irregularities in voter registrations, claiming nearly 15,000 duplicate and 18,000 fake voter names exist in the Belapur constituency. A party delegation met the police commissioner and returning officer on Friday, with MNS leader Gajanan Kale citing BJP MLA Manda Mhatre's corruption allegations in the voter registration process. He demanded police obtain evidence from the legislator and register criminal cases against corrupt officials. Separately, election officials in Palghar district removed duplicate entries after a woman's name appeared six times on the electoral roll. Sushma Sanjay Gupta of Nallasopara had repeatedly filed online registration forms after not receiving her voter ID card following her initial January 2024 application. Five duplicate entries were deleted, leaving only one name on the roll. *—PTI*

Every infiltrator will be deported: Shah

Shah accuses Lalu of focusing only on family

KHAGARIA, 25 OCT

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday slammed the INDIA bloc for opposing the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in poll-bound Bihar, and asserted that every infiltrator would be detected and deported to their countries.

Addressing a public rally in Khagaria district, Shah said this assembly election will decide whether the 'jungle raaj' will return to Bihar or the state remains on the path of development.

"Let Rahul Gandhi launch yatras to protect these infiltrators. It does not matter. He cannot protect infiltrators by taking out 'Ghuspetiya Bachao Yatra'. Every infiltrator would be detected, deleted (from the voters' list) and deported to their countries," Shah said.

He accused RJD supremo Lalu Prasad of concentrating only on the prosperity of his family.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji and CM Nitish Kumar ji want overall development of Bihar, but Lalu Prasad wants 'vikas' (prosperity) of his family only. People don't want the return of 'jungle raj'

Union Home Minister Amit Shah PHOTO: PTI

in the state," Shah claimed.

He also claimed that there was a substantial decrease in the number of heinous crimes in Bihar during the NDA rule.

"Under the RJD rule, murders, dacoity and other crimes were normal in Bihar," he alleged.

Meanwhile, Shah said the assembly elections will decide whether the 'jungle raj' will return to Bihar or the state remains on the path of development.

Addressing a public rally in Khagaria district, he slammed the INDIA bloc for opposing the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in poll-bound Bihar, and asserted that every infiltrator would be detected, deleted from the voters' list and deported to their countries.

His allusion was to Congress MP and leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi. *—PTI*

Will bring industries to Bihar: Tejashwi

Vows govt jobs for every family within 20 days

KHAGARIA, 25 OCT

INDIA bloc's chief ministerial candidate Tejashwi Yadav on Saturday said he would make Bihar a leading state in the country by bringing in investments and setting up factories, if the opposition coalition is voted to power.

Addressing an election rally in Gogri in Khagaria in support of RJD's Parbatta candidate Sanjeev Kumar, Yadav said he was fighting the elections not just to form a government but to build the state.

Yadav criticised Union Home Minister Amit Shah for stating that factories cannot be set up in Bihar because of a dearth of land.

He charged Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Shah of "hijacking" CM Nitish Kumar, who, he claimed, "is incapable of leading Bihar anymore".

Yadav said that Chief Minister did not bother to visit flood-affected people, but he would ensure proper drainage facilities to eliminate the problem of waterlogging and also establish more schools and colleges in the state.

The RJD leader said if the INDIA bloc is voted to power in Bihar, a law will be enacted within 20 days to provide government jobs to every family and regularise the services of contractual workers and community mobilisers alongside "giving the annual sum of Rs 30,000 to women in a single instalment within a few weeks after our government is formed".

INDIA bloc's chief ministerial candidate Tejashwi Yadav PHOTO: PTI

- Yadav also claimed that the BJP was "scared" by the nomination of a leader belonging to the extremely backwards classes (EBC) as the opposition coalition's deputy CM face for the Bihar polls.

Yadav also claimed that the BJP was "scared" by the nomination of a leader belonging to the extremely backwards classes (EBC) as the opposition coalition's deputy CM face for the Bihar polls.

The INDIA bloc has named Vikashsheel Insaan Party (VIP) founder Mukesh Sahani, an EBC leader, as its deputy CM candidate.

He claimed that BJP leaders are now raising concerns about why the INDIA bloc did not name a Muslim leader as its deputy CM face. *—PTI*

COPS WARN AGAINST SONGS FUELING CASTE DIVIDE

PATNA, 25 OCT

Ahead of Bihar Assembly polls, police have warned against posting songs or videos with provocative caste overtones on social media, vowing strict action under the model code of conduct.

DGP Vinay Kumar said such posts, including Bhojpuri songs with objectionable content, will not be tolerated.

The cyber cell has registered 10 FIRs and 53 station diary entries, removing over 16 offending posts so far.

Officers emphasised that social media has become a key battleground, with party supporters spreading caste-based messages through reels and songs.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has also issued guidelines on the ethical use of AI-generated and synthetic content during campaigns, stressing transparency and accountability to protect electoral integrity.

The Bihar Assembly will go to polls in two phases on 6 and 11 November, with results declared on 14 November. *—PTI*

CHHATH PUJA: LALU ACCUSES CENTRE OF INADEQUATE TRAINS

PATNA, 25 OCT

RJD leader **Lalu Prasad** has accused the Centre of failing to run sufficient Bihar-bound trains for Chhath Puja, resulting in passengers travelling under "inhumane conditions." In a post on X, he referred to the government's claim of operating 12,000 special trains as a "blatant lie." Congress leader Rahul Gandhi echoed this sentiment, highlighting the plight of travellers, asserting, "It's a right, not a favour." *—PTI*

Savings of 300M LIC holders 'misused' to benefit Adani: Cong

NEW DELHI, 25 OCT

- Congress general secretary of communications Jairam Ramesh alleged the savings of LIC's 30 crore policyholders were "systematically misused" to benefit the Adani Group.

The Congress on Saturday demanded that Parliament's Public Accounts Committee investigate the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) following a Washington Post report that the public sector company made huge investments in Adani Group's securities after they took a beating in the markets.

However, LIC denied the allegations as "false, baseless, and far from the truth".

Congress general secretary in-charge of communications Jairam Ramesh alleged the savings of LIC's 30 crore policyholders were "systematically misused" to benefit the Adani Group.

The Washington Post, citing internal documents, reported that Indian officials drafted and pushed through a proposal to invest about Rs 33,000 crores of LIC funds in various Adani Group companies in May this year.

Markets regulator SEBI cleared the Adani Group of stock manipulation allegations made by US short-seller Hindenburg Research, saying fund transfer between group companies did not fall foul of any regulation. The SEBI probe was initiated after intervention by the Supreme Court.

The Department of Financial Services or any other body does not have any role in such decisions, LIC said.

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge said the real beneficiaries of the government's Direct Benefit Transfer initiative "are not the common people of India, but Modi's best friends".

"Under whose pressure did the officials of the Ministry of Finance and NITI Aayog decide that their job was to bail out a private company facing funding difficulties due to serious allegations of criminality?" Ramesh said. *—PTI*

NC, BJP reject 'fixed match' claims in J&K

SRINAGAR, 25 OCT

The National Conference (NC) and the BJP on Saturday rejected allegations of a "fixed match" in the recent Rajya Sabha elections in Jammu and Kashmir.

NC president Farooq Abdullah denied claims by People's Conference chief Sajad Lone that his party had "gifted" seven votes to the BJP. Abdullah said the NC had turned down a BJP offer to avoid a contest, insisting on a fair electoral fight.

In the first Rajya Sabha polls since J&K became a Union Territory, the NC won three seats while the BJP secured one.

BJP candidate Sat Sharma defeated NC's Imran Nabi Dar by 32 votes. Abdullah highlighted that all NC MLAs remained united and expressed gratitude to the Congress, PDP, and independent legislators for their support.

Lone alleged NC had deliberately crossed-voted to benefit the BJP, but both Abdullah and BJP leaders rejected these accusations. The NC also dismissed suggestions that it was unprepared for the fourth seat as "propaganda", pointing out that its candidate still secured 21 votes but lost due to some MLAs backtracking.

Leader of Opposition in the J&K Assembly, Sunil Sharma, welcomed the seven legislators who voted for the BJP, saying they had sent a clear warning to the NC government.

Abdullah further commented on broader political issues, including Bihar elections and power policies in J&K, stressing that promises of free electricity were financially unsustainable and required prudence. *—PTI*

CPI leaders dissent over Kerala govt's PM SHRI MoU

T'PURAM, 25 OCT

More CPI leaders on Saturday came out against the LDF government signing the memorandum of understanding (MoU) for the Centre's Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI) scheme, demanding that the agreement be cancelled.

The CPI, a key ally in the ruling LDF, has already expressed its dissent to the CPI(M) and the state government on the issue.

CPI central committee member Prakash Babu said, "The statement made by the education minister that the National Education Policy (NEP) will not be implemented is wrong. Implementation of NEP is the first condition in the PM SHRI MoU."

He added that there are provisions to rescind the MoU.

CPI Minister J Chinchu Rani said that the PM SHRI scheme was discussed twice in the state cabinet and that CPI ministers had opposed it.

> But, better late than never, ... Should our kids study under the threatening condition of 40-50-year-old buildings? Let all of it improve. Let it (scheme) benefit them (children)
>
> -Suresh Gopi, Union Minister of Kerala

She added that the CPI ministers and leaders came to know about the signing of the MoU only through the media.

Meanwhile, Kerala General Education Minister V Sivankutty on Saturday visited the CPI state headquarters here and held discussions with state secretary Binoy Viswam in an effort to ease tensions between the two LDF allies over the matter.

CPI Minister GR Anil was also present at the meeting, which lasted over an hour.

However, Sivankutty declined to share further details, adding, "All issues will be resolved". *—PTI*

Court refuses bail to YouTuber Jyoti in espionage case

CHANDIGARH, 25 OCT

A court in Haryana's Hisar district has dismissed the bail plea of YouTuber Jyoti Malhotra, who was arrested in May on the suspicion of espionage, and said there is a reasonable apprehension that her release on bail may impede the probe.

Malhotra, who ran the YouTube channel 'Travel with JO', is in judicial custody at present.

The court of the additional sessions judge dismissed the regular bail plea.

The court observed that public interest and national security considerations assume special significance where the allegations, if established, would impair the sovereign interest of the state.

The petitioner's counsel argued that the intelligence inputs relied upon are untested and that the prosecution failed to produce direct evidence of communication or transmission of sensitive material to foreign agents'. It also said the court, when considering the bail, must view the totality of the evidence available at the stage.

The judge said courts routinely recognise social and familial vulnerabilities when deciding bail.

Malhotra was in touch with Ehsan-ur-Rahim alias Danish, a staffer at the Pakistani High Commission, since November 2023. India expelled Danish on espionage charges. *—PTI*

'WILL BRING PRIDE TO TN'

Ramadoss names daughter as PMK acting Prez

CHENNAI, 25 OCT

Dr S Ramadoss, founder of the Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), has appointed his eldest daughter, Sreegandhi, as the party's working president, replacing his son, Dr Anbumani.

This decision follows Anbumani's expulsion from the party in September due to anti-party activities and defiance of leadership.

At a general council meeting in Dharmapuri, Ramadoss stated, "I have appointed my eldest daughter Gandhimathi as PMK's working president... She will bring pride to Tamil Nadu."

He expressed confidence in her ability to make a significant impact on the party's development.

Sreegandhi, also known as Gandhimathi, expressed surprise at her new role, saying, "I got this position unexpectedly. I will carry out the leadership's instructions."

Sreegandhi and S Ramadoss PHOTO: X/RAMADOSS

- This decision follows Anbumani's expulsion from the party in September due to anti-party activities and defiance of leadership. Sreegandhi, also known as Gandhimathi, expressed surprise at her new role

Additionally, GKM Tamil Kumaran has been appointed as president of the youth wing. Anbumani, currently in Tiruppur, refrained from commenting on the situation, describing it as the party's internal affairs. *—PTI*

Oppn claims Sabarimala gold found at millionaire's home

KOCHI, 25 OCT

Kerala Assembly Leader of Opposition VD Satheesan on Saturday claimed that gold missing from the Sabarimala temple had been recovered from the home of a millionaire, backing Congress allegations that it was sold to a wealthy individual.

Satheesan cited the seizure of several gold bars by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) from a jewellery shop owned by Karnataka-based businessman Govardhan, who reportedly funded the gold-plating of the sreekovil (sanctum sanctorum) door frame. The project had been officially sponsored by Bengaluru businessman Unnikrishnan Potty, now in SIT custody.

"All that the Opposition said about the missing gold has been proved correct," Satheesan said, alleging irregularities by the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) in awarding the gold-plating work. He demanded the resignation of Devaswom Minister VN Vasavan and the dissolution of the TDB.

Potty and former Devaswom administrative officer B Murari Babu face charges related to the disappearance of gold from the dwarapalaka idols and sreekovil door frames. *—PTI*

Andhra bus mishap: Driver escaped through door

The driver has been booked for negligence, overspeeding

KURNOOL, 25 OCT

The driver of the ill-fated Bengaluru-bound bus which caught fire and killed 20 people on 24 October here, had escaped the inferno by jumping out through the passenger door and failed to gauge the situation, police said.

Both the driver, Miriyala Lakshmaiah and the additional driver are in police custody. Lakshmaiah was booked for negligence and overspeeding.

As many as 19 passengers travelling in the private bus and a motor bike rider were charred to death after it collided with the two-wheeler at Chinnatekuru village of Andhra Pradesh's Kurnool district.

There were 44 passengers in the bus and several managed to escape the fire.

After escaping the raging fire, Lakshmaiah woke up the additional driver sleeping in the luggage rack at the bottom portion of the bus.

Together they broke the window panes with a rod used to change tyres, enabling some passengers to escape the blaze.

Some onlookers also broke a few more window panes while a some others were broken from inside by the panic-stricken passengers rushing to escape.

However, the fire continued to rage and engulf the entire bus, prompting the scared Lakshmaiah to flee the spot.

The bus belonging to V Kaveri Travels was not registered in and Diu and had an all-India permit to engage in business in Andhra Pradesh.

The police examined the fire safety mechanisms employed by the bus operator.

Meanwhile, the DNA profiling of the victims will be completed by 27 October 27.

Samples from 19 bodies were collected and sent to the Forensic Sciences Laboratory in Vijayawada.

Relatives of 16 bodies have given their samples for the DNA profiling while two more were to reach Vijayawada on Saturday.

The bodies will be handed over to their families once the DNA samples arrive. —*PTI*

Police personnel investigate the spot where a Bengaluru-bound private bus caught fire after colliding with a two-wheeler in Kurnool **PHOTO: PTI**

Authorities in T'gana crack down on pvt buses

HYDERABAD, 25 OCT

Following a devastating bus fire accident in Andhra Pradesh that claimed 20 lives, Telangana transport authorities conducted inspections on private buses entering Hyderabad on Saturday. They issued 54 Vehicle Check Reports (VCRs) and seized a bus for violations, including a lack of a fire extinguisher and tax evasion. Transport Minister Ponnam Prabhakar emphasised that private operators must ensure vehicle fitness and adhere to regulations, warning of strict action against negligence. —*PTI*

13 Africans held in liquor party raid in 'dry' Gujarat

AHMEDABAD, 25 OCT

Police raided a farmhouse on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, arresting 20 individuals, including 13 African nationals, for allegedly consuming alcohol at a party. Out of nearly 70 attendees, 15 were apprehended during a late-night raid. In the early hours of Saturday, five more, including two bootleggers and the farmhouse owner, were arrested. The police said that the liquor party was organised under the guise of a gathering for African students. Five others, including two local bootleggers and the farmhouse owner Milan Patel, were apprehended. Police recovered 51 bottles of liquor and 15 hookahs, also banned in Gujarat. They were booked under the Gujarat Prohibition Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

SC to hear on stray dogs on 27 October

NEW DELHI, 25 OCT

The Supreme Court will hear on 27 October a suo motu case concerning stray dogs across India. Earlier, on 22 August, the court expanded the case's scope beyond Delhi-NCR, making all states and Union Territories parties to the proceedings. The court will hear the matter along with four related petitions. The apex court had previously modified its directive prohibiting the release of vaccinated stray dogs, allowing them to be released after sterilisation, deworming, and vaccination. The court aims to frame a national policy on stray dog management and has sought compliance reports from municipal bodies on resources available for implementing the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules. —*PTI*

Jackal beaten to death in UP after it injures 5

BAHRAICH, 25 OCT

Six people were injured in two separate wildlife attacks in Uttar Pradesh's Bahraich district. In Nanpara forest range, a rabid jackal bit five villagers across Mogariya and Masood Nagar Basthanwa before being beaten to death. Forest officials confirmed the animal was infected with rabies, and all victims received anti-rabies treatment. In another incident, a tiger mauled a woman working in fields near Harkhapur village in Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary. The victim, Kuraisha Bano, sustained serious injuries but is now stable. The attack sparked protests over alleged delay by forest officials. Three teams and camera traps have been deployed to monitor tiger movement, while residents have been urged to remain alert. —*PTI*

Gulf Air fined for denying boarding over one-name ID

CHENNAI, 25 OCT

The Chennai North District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission has directed the Gulf Air Airlines to compensate a former Tamil Nadu legislator for denying him travel at Moscow airport as his passport did not contain his surname. The airlines was asked to pay a compensation of about Rs 1.4 lakh with nine per cent interest per annum from the date of travel, to former MLA and advocate Nizamudeen, the affected passenger and a resident of Periamet here. On 9 February, 2023, he was scheduled to travel by Gulf Air flight from Moscow to Dubai via Bahrain but was denied travel. The airlines will also refund the cost of the ticket along with money for litigation —*PTI*

'COMPLICATIONS IN PREGNANCY'

A metro train runs amid low visibility due to a layer of smog near Ghazipur landfill in New Delhi on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

Respiratory cases rise as smog chokes Delhi, NCR cities

NEW DELHI, 25 OCT

The days following Deepavali have once again brought a sharp decline in Delhi-NCR's air quality, with hospitals reporting a noticeable surge in respiratory and pregnancy-related complications.

Doctors have attributed this spike to the combined effects of air and noise pollution caused by the widespread bursting of firecrackers.

Both outpatient and emergency cases saw a sharp rise between 20 to 23 October, as pollution levels soared far beyond permissible limits. Delhi's Air Quality Index remained in the "very poor" category in the period.

The sudden exposure to smoke, toxic gases, and fine particulate matter has left the elderly, children, pregnant women, and those with chronic respiratory or cardiac illnesses struggling to cope.

"We've seen a nearly 30 per cent jump in patients with breathing difficulties, asthma flare-ups, and allergic bronchitis within just two days after Deepavali," said Pulkit Agarwal, Consultant Pulmonologist, SilverStreak Superspeciality Hospital.

Gynaecologists are equally alarmed about the less visible but serious effects of pollution on maternal and foetal health. High levels of particulate matter can cross the placental barrier and interfere with foetal growth and brain development, increasing the risk of preterm birth and low birth weight. Several expectant mothers reported shortness of breath, dizziness, and elevated blood.

Post-Diwali, PM2.5 levels peaked at 675, a four-year high.

Health experts recommended switching to eco-friendly crackers. —*PTI*

CHHATH POOJA BEGINS

Devotees take a dip in the Ganga in Patna in Bihar on the first day of the four-day Chhath Pooja festivities. It is a festival dedicated to the Sun God, during which people fast and pray for health and prosperity **PHOTO: PTI**

Man named in M'rashtra doc's suicide note held

PUNE, 25 OCT

A 28-year-old woman doctor was found dead in a hotel room in Phaltan, Satara district, prompting her relatives to demand capital punishment for two men named in her suicide note.

Police arrested Prashant Bankar, a software engineer accused of mental harassment, and have registered a case for rape and abetment to suicide against him and a sub-inspector, Gopal Badane, who was named in the note and subsequently suspended.

The victim, originally from Beed district, alleged repeated harassment and rape in the note written on her palm.

"Just apprehending the accused is not enough. They should be hanged to ensure justice," one relative stated. Meanwhile, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Ambadas Danve criticized Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis over the incident, calling for better women's security.

West Bengal's Trinamool Congress accused the ruling BJP of remaining "emotionally bankrupt" over the unfortunate incident. —*PTI*

Rains lash Kerala; Cyclone to hit Odisha

T'PURAM, 25 OCT

Heavy rains persist in Kerala, causing water levels to rise in dam reservoirs across Palakkad, Idukki, and Thrissur districts, while an orange and yellow alert, with possibility of a cyclonic storm, was sounded in several Odisha districts.

Authorities have opened dam shutters in Kerala's Walayar, Malampuzha, Moolathara, and Chuliyar due to approaching maximum storage capacities. The situation has prompted 'red alert' statuses at high-threat dams, including Ponmudi and Madupetty, and 'orange alert' at Sholayar in Thrissur.

The India Meteorological Departmentissued warnings for Odisha as a depression forms over the Bay of Bengal, expected to bring heavy rain from 27 October.

The IMD forecast indicates this depression could intensify into a cyclonic storm, affecting coastalares of Andhra Pradesh most severely.

Fishermen are advised against venturing into local waters until 29 October, while district collectors were urged to prepare for possible evacuations of people, particularly in landslide-prone areas. —*PTI*

Democracy 'alien concept' for Pakistan: India at UN

UNITED NATIONS, 25 OCT

Asserting that democracy is an "alien" concept for Pakistan, India has called upon Islamabad to end grave human rights violations in territories under its illegal occupation, where the population is in "open revolt" against military occupation, repression, brutality and exploitation.

Responding to the Pakistani envoy's references at the United Nations Security Council's open debate on 'The United Nations Organisation: Looking into the Future' on 1, India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish, said, "The people of Jammu and Kashmir exercise their fundamental rights in accordance with India's time-tested democratic traditions and constitutional framework."

The envoy reiterated that Jammu and Kashmir "has been, is, and will always be" an integral and inalienable part of India.

Harish also emphasised that the UN must undertake "real, comprehensive reforms," saying that the 80-year-old Security Council architecture no longer reflects contemporary geopolitical realities.

He underlined that the Global South must have a greater voice in global decision-making.

He said the world must move beyond "pennies and posts" to craft a new vision for the UN that is more agile and responsive to global challenges like pandemics, terrorism, economic instability and climate change.

Harish noted that the UN faced questions of "relevance, legitimacy, credibility, and efficacy." —*PTI*

- Harish said that the UN must make "comprehensive reforms," as the Security Council don't reflects contemporary geopolitical realities.

Shreyas, Alok booked in fraud case

BAGHPAT, 25 OCT

An FIR has been filed against 22 individuals, including Bollywood actors Shreyas Talpade and Alok Nath, in connection with an investment fraud involving a fake finance company that allegedly duped hundreds of people by promising to double their money within a year.

Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Praveen Singh Chauhan stated that the Urban State Credit Cooperative Society Limited, based in Loni, operated investment schemes through agents in various districts of western Uttar Pradesh, including Baghpat, Meerut, and Ghaziabad.

Chauhan noted, "Shreyas Talpade was projected as the promoter, while Alok Nath was introduced as the brand ambassador to help the company gain people's trust." Over 500 investors deposited substantial sums, but when they attempted to withdraw their money after a year, the company's office was found closed, and its officials missing.

The investigation is ongoing, focusing on the celebrities' financial records. —*PTI*

MADE NATION LAUGH

From D'Mello to Indravadan: Satish's legacy lives on

Satish Shah captured hearts as the funny hawaldar Rajesh Singh in 'Judwaa'; In 'Main Hoon Na' Shah played a short-tempered college teacher whose signature trait was spitting while speaking **PHOTO: X**

MUMBAI, 25 OCT

For over four decades, Satish Shah was synonymous with effortless humour, impeccable timing and unforgettable characters that left audiences smiling long after the credits rolled. A graduate of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Shah's journey from theatre to television and cinema shaped him into one of India's most versatile comic actors.

He began his career with small but memorable appearances in art-house films such as 'Arvind Desai Ki Ajeeb Dastaan' (1978) and 'Gaman' (1979). His early breakthrough came in Muzaffar Ali's 'Umrao Jaan' (1981), where he portrayed Dilawar, the man who sells Rekha's Amiran into a life of courtesans in Lucknow — a short but pivotal role that showcased his range.

However, Shah truly became a household name with Kundan Shah's cult classic 'Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro' (1983). Playing the corrupt municipal commissioner D'Mello, he managed to steal scenes — even as a corpse — in the film's legendary Mahabharata play sequence. His lifeless yet hilarious presence became a lasting symbol of Indian satire at its best.

On television, Shah cemented his legacy through groundbreaking shows. In 'Yeh Jo Hai Zindagi' (1984), he famously portrayed 55 different characters across 55 episodes, demonstrating an unmatched chameleon-like talent. Later, in 'Filmi Chakkar' (1995), he charmed audiences as Prakash Jaisawal, a film-obsessed everyman.

The 2000s brought another iconic chapter — 'Sarabhai vs Sarabhai', where Shah's portrayal of Indravadan Sarabhai, the witty, sarcastic patriarch, became a cultural phenomenon. His razor-sharp banter with Ratna Pathak Shah's Maya and Rupali Ganguli's Monisha are quoted today. His prolific filmography reads like a timeline of Hindi cinema with hits like 'Kabhi Haan Kabhi , 'Hum Aapke Hain Koun', and many more. —*PTI*

Drunk engineer runs over 5 pedestrians in UP

AGRA, 25 OCT

A speeding car ran over pedestrians, killing five people and leaving two injured in Agra.

The five critically injured individuals were declared dead at the Sarojini Naidu Medical College on 24 October.

The deceased were identified as Babli 33, Bhanu Pratap, 25, Kamal, 23, Krish, 20 and Bantesh, 21. Bhanu Pratap worked as a parcel delivery agent for a private company.

Kamal and Krish were friends, who were to leave for Delhi on the day.

The accident occurred near Nagla Budhi, ahead of the Central Hindi Institute.

The driver of the car was identified as Anshu Gupta, an engineer and resident of Agra.

Anshu was allegedly intoxicated when the car he was driving hit the road divider before veering off and striking people standing on the roadside. A case was registered. —*PTI*

INFLATED DEFIANCE

Across US cities, anti-ICE protesters are wearing inflatable frog, shark and dinosaur costumes to mock claims that demonstrations are violent. In Portland, a viral clip of an officer pepper-spraying an inflatable frog drew over two million views. Protester Seth Todd said the goal was to "make the president and the feds look dumb." The "Portland frog" has since inspired "Operation Inflation," a campaign using playful costumes to expose police aggression and counter Trump's "domestic terrorist" narrative through humour ***PHOTO: PTI***

DELHI TAKES SMOG FIGHT TO THE CLOUDS

The planned artificial rainfall through cloud-seeding is meant to ease the air pollution crisis in Delhi ***PHOTO: PTI***

The planned artificial rainfall through cloud-seeding this month is meant to ease the air pollution crisis, typical of Delhi winters in recent years.

However, the city's brush with the first-ever artificial rain experiment was actually in the monsoon of 1957, said an Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) report.

The Delhi government's attempt this year, with a test run in Burari on Thursday, marks the third chapter in the history of artificial rainfall in the city, with the second attempt traced back to the wintertime of the early 1970s, according to the report.

The trials in 1971-72 were carried out at the National Physical Laboratory campus, covering roughly a 25 km radius over central Delhi.

The silver iodide particles, released by generators placed on the ground, acted as tiny nuclei around which moisture condensed to form raindrops, the report said.

Twenty-two days were identified as favourable for the experiment between December 1971 and March 1972. Of these, seeding was conducted on 11 days, while the remaining 11 days were kept as control days for comparison, the IITM report said.

Preliminary analysis of the data indicated a tendency for increased rainfall on the seeded days, suggesting that artificial rain could indeed be triggered under suitable weather conditions, it noted.

After 53 years, Delhi once again turned to the skies on Thursday for the experiment.

Officials said during the trial in Burari, small amounts of silver iodide and sodium chloride, compounds used to induce artificial rain, were released from an aircraft.

However, there was less than 20 per cent moisture in the air, much lower than the required 50 per cent, and no rainfall occurred in the area.

In its report on the test run, IIT Kanpur stated, "This flight served as a proving mission to assess the capabilities for cloud seeding, the readiness and endurance of the aircraft, the functionality of the seeding equipment and flares, and the coordination among all the agencies involved."

Its report noted that specially designed flares were used to release both silver iodide and sodium chloride.

The cloud-seeding project, jointly developed by IIT Kanpur and the Delhi government, aims to explore artificial rainfall as a method to reduce particulate pollution.

The project, approved by multiple departments including the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), seeks to assess whether artificial rain can serve as a viable solution to tackle rising pollution levels during winter.

The Delhi Cabinet approved a proposal on 7 May to conduct five cloud-seeding trials at a total cost of Rs 3.21 crore.

Over the years, research on cloud seeding has expanded across the country. New centres were established near Madras (now Chennai) and Pune, where clouds could be seeded both from the ground and through aircraft, according to the report.

Under IITM's Cloud Aerosol Interaction and Rainfall Enhancement Experiment (CAIPEEX) programme, scientists have spent more than a decade studying clouds and rainfall in different parts of the country.

During CAIPEEX Phase IV (2017–2019), IITM scientists conducted experiments in Maharashtra's Solapur, a rain-shadow region that receives limited rainfall. Over two years, 276 clouds were studied to test the effectiveness of cloud seeding, the report said.

Cloud seeding, according to IITM, is a technique in which cloud-forming particles are introduced into clouds to enhance rainfall.

There are two main types -- hygroscopic and glaciogenic. Hygroscopic seeding is done in warm clouds, where tiny seed particles attract water vapour, helping droplets merge and grow until they fall as rain.

Glaciogenic seeding is carried out in cold clouds, where silver iodide particles form ice crystals near the cloud top, which later melt and fall as rain, the report noted.

The results from the CAIPEEX IV experiment showed that hygroscopic seeding increased rainfall by up to 46 per cent in some areas, and by an average of 18 per cent over a 100-square-kilometre area, the annual report noted.

According to IITM, in Solapur alone, the technique contributed about 867 million litres of additional water.

Cloud seeding uses advanced technology — aircraft equipped with flares release seeding material into suitable clouds, ground-based radars track cloud movements, and automatic rain gauges measure rainfall on the ground.

Scientists analyse real-time data to select the most suitable clouds for seeding, ensuring maximum efficiency, the report added.

Globally, cloud seeding is practised in more than 56 countries, including Australia, China, Russia, Thailand, the UAE, and the United States, where it is used for weather modification, rainfall enhancement, and even pollution reduction. *—PTI*

SALAR

Trump opens Alaska wildlife refuge to oil & gas drilling

The Trump administration on Thursday finalised plans to open the coastal plain of Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to potential oil and gas drilling, renewing a long-simmering debate over whether to drill in one of the nation's environmental jewels.

US Interior Secretary Doug Burgum announced the decision that paves the way for future lease sales within the refuge's 1.5 million-acre (6,31,309 hectare) coastal plain, an area that's considered sacred by the Indigenous Gwich'in. The plan fulfills pledges made by President Donald Trump and congressional Republicans to reopen this portion of the refuge to possible development. Trump's bill of tax breaks and spending cuts, passed during the summer, called for at least four lease sales within the refuge over a 10-year period.

Burgum was joined in Washington DC, by Alaska Republican Gov Mike Dunleavy and the state's congressional delegation for this and other lands-related announcements, including the department's decision to restore oil and gas leases in the refuge that had been canceled by the prior administration.

A federal judge in March said the Biden administration lacked authority to cancel the leases, which were held by a state corporation that was the major bidder in the first-ever lease sale for the refuge held at the end of Trump's first term.

Leaders in Indigenous Gwich'in communities near the refuge consider the coastal plain sacred, noting its importance to a caribou herd they rely upon, and they oppose drilling there. Leaders of Kaktovik, an Iñupiaq community within the refuge, support drilling and consider responsible oil development to be key to their region's economic well-being.

"It is encouraging to see decisionmakers in Washington advancing policies that respect our voice and support Kaktovik's long term success," Kaktovik Iñupiat Corp. President Charles "CC" Lampe said in a statement.

A second lease sale in the refuge, held near the end of President Joe Biden's term, yielded no bidders but critics of the sale argued it was too restrictive in scope.

Meda DeWitt, Alaska senior manager with The Wilderness Society, said that with Thursday's announcement the administration "is placing corporate interests above the lives, cultures and spiritual responsibilities of the people whose survival depends on the Porcupine caribou herd, the freedom to live from this land and the health of the Arctic Refuge."

The actions detailed Thursday are consistent with those laid out by Trump on his return to office in January, which also included calls to speed the building of a road to connect the communities of King Cove and Cold Bay.

Burgum announced completion of a land exchange deal aimed at building the road that would run through Izembek National Wildlife Refuge. King Cove residents have long sought a land connection through the refuge to the all-weather airport at Cold Bay, seeing it as vital to accessing emergency medical care. Dunleavy and the congressional delegation have supported the effort, calling it a life and safety issue. Conservationists vowed a legal challenge to the agreement, with some tribal leaders worried a road will drive away migratory birds they rely on. The refuge, near the tip of the Alaska Peninsula, contains internationally recognized habitat for migrating waterfowl. Past land exchange proposals have been met with controversy and litigation.

The Centre for Biological Diversity, an environmental group, said the latest land agreement would exchange about 500 acres (202 hectares) of "ecologically irreplaceable wilderness lands" within the refuge for up to 1,739 acres (703.7 hectares) of King Cove Corp. lands outside the refuge. Tribal leaders in some communities further north, in Yup'ik communities in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta region, have expressed concerns that development of a road would harm the migratory birds important to their subsistence ways of life.

"We absolutely plan to challenge this decision in court," said Cooper Freeman, the center's Alaska director. *—PTI*

ARCTIC
NEEDS TO BE PROTECTED
WHAT HAPPENED?
Trump allows 1.56 million acres (6,315 km²) of protected Arctic wilderness to be opened for oil and gas drilling.
It is considered the "Crown Jewel" of America's public lands.
One of the last untouched ecosystems on Earth.
WHAT'S AT STAKE?
It is home to iconic wildlife such as:
Polar bears (birthing grounds),
Bowhead whales (feeding zones),
Arctic foxes, Snowy owls, Musk oxen and seals.
It is also the sacred land of the Gwich'in People, an indigenous community of the Arctic.
Drilling threatens ancient caribou calving grounds — vital for Gwich'in culture and survival.
THE BIGGER PICTURE
The Arctic is warming 4× faster than the global average.
Drilling = More emissions + habitat loss + irreversible damage.

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

NATO on edge as mystery drones breach European skies raising alarm

Denmark's PM Mette Frederiksen, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Britain's PM Keir Starmer, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte and Netherland's PN Dick Schoof speak to the media after a meeting of the 'Coalition of the Willing' in London ***PHOTO: PTI***

Unexplained drone flights over several European Union member states in recent weeks have alarmed governments and the public alike, triggering airspace closures, military responses, and fresh concerns about NATO's preparedness amid heightened tensions with Russia.

Officials say intrusions into NATO airspace have reached an unprecedented scale, with some incidents blamed on Moscow as potential tests of the alliance's defences. Russia has denied any involvement.

On 10 September, a swarm of Russian drones reportedly entered Polish airspace, prompting NATO aircraft to scramble and intercept several of the devices, the first direct encounter between Moscow and NATO since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February, 2022. Days later, NATO jets escorted three Russian warplanes out of Estonia's airspace.

Since then, multiple sightings have been reported across the continent, near airports, military installations and critical infrastructure. European defence ministers have now agreed to establish a "drone wall" along their borders to detect, track and intercept unauthorised drones.

Officials have offered little detail about the incidents, and some governments only confirmed overflights days later. In Denmark, authorities received more than 500 tips of sightings in just 24 hours, some later dismissed as mistaken reports of stars in the night sky. Several countries are still debating whether authorities should be permitted to shoot down unidentified drones.

The latest confirmed violation occurred on Thursday, when two Russian military aircraft briefly entered Lithuania's airspace. President Gitanas Nausėda called it "a blatant breach of territorial integrity" of the EU and NATO member state.

Airports disrupted across Europe

Germany's Munich Airport was shut down twice earlier this month following drone sightings. In Denmark, Copenhagen Airport, Scandinavia's busiest, was forced to halt operations on 22 September after multiple drones were detected. Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen described the incident as potentially "the most serious attack on Danish critical infrastructure to date," adding that Russian involvement could not be ruled out.On the same evening, a drone sighting at Norway's Oslo Airport forced air traffic onto a single runway. Authorities are investigating whether the incidents were linked.

Between 24 and 25 September, drones were also detected over four smaller Danish airports, two of which serve military functions. Defence Minister Troels Lund Poulsen said the "systematic flights" suggested a "professional" actor. Around the same time, Danish media reported drones over or near Karup Air Base, Denmark's largest military facility. The Defence Ministry refused to confirm the sightings, citing operational security and ongoing investigations.

Critical infrastructure targeted in Germany

In northern Germany, authorities are probing reports that unidentified drones may have been spying on key facilities in Schleswig-Holstein. On 25 September, multiple drones were spotted over a power plant in Kiel, and near a university hospital and a shipyard in the city, according to Der Spiegel.

Regional Interior Minister Sabine Sütterlin-Waack told state legislators that flying objects "of various types and sizes" had been seen, while Chief Public Prosecutor Stephanie Gropp confirmed an investigation was under way.

Der Spiegel reported that two small drones were observed over the Kiel factory of TKMS, a defence technology manufacturer. Later, a "combined drone formation" appeared above the university hospital and a power plant, with further sightings over government buildings and the Heide oil refinery. Additional reports emerged from a military base in Sanitz, in the neighbouring state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

Russian military planes breach Baltic airspace

Last month, Estonia summoned a Russian diplomat to protest after three Russian fighter aircraft entered its airspace without permission and remained there for 12 minutes.

Weeks later, Lithuania's armed forces said two Russian aircraft, a Su-30 fighter jet and an IL-78 refuelling plane, crossed about 700 metres into Lithuanian airspace on Thursday evening, remaining for roughly 18 seconds before leaving. Lithuanian officials believe the planes may have been conducting refuelling exercises from Russia's Kaliningrad exclave. Two Spanish fighter jets on a NATO policing mission were scrambled in response.

Russia's Defence Ministry denied any violation, saying its Su-30s were conducting training flights "in strict compliance with international regulations."

Mounting regional anxiety

The Baltic states, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, have been on heightened alert amid Russia's ongoing aggression in Ukraine. The spate of drone intrusions and airspace breaches has reinforced fears of hybrid threats targeting Europe's security, infrastructure and information networks.

As one senior European diplomat put it, the recent incidents appear to be "a stress test, not just of NATO's radar systems, but of Europe's political resolve." *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Indian jailed for molesting visitor in Singapore

SINGAPORE, 25 OCT

An Indian staff nurse at Singapore's Raffles Hospital was sentenced Friday to 14 months' imprisonment and two strokes of the cane for molesting a male visitor. 34-year-old Elipe Siva Nagu pleaded guilty to the offence that occurred in June when he approached the victim in a patient's toilet under the guise of wanting to "disinfect" him. The shocked victim froze during the assault. The incident left the victim suffering flashbacks, the court heard. Elipe was suspended immediately after the offence. The victim had been visiting his grandfather, who was admitted to the hospital on North Bridge Road. The case was reported on 21 June, and Elipe was arrested two days later. *—PTI*

Sri Lanka probes Thai-gifted elephants' health

COLOMBO, 25 OCT

Sri Lanka formed a veterinary committee to examine two elephants gifted by Thailand in 2001, following welfare concerns raised by Bangkok. Deputy Environment Minister Anton Jayakodi said preliminary checks showed "no major health issues", attributing the animals' weakened state to musth, a natural hormonal condition when elephants often refuse food.

Thailand's deputy prime minister is expected to visit Colombo next week to discuss the elephants' welfare. The Reclaim Thai Elephant Group alleged the animals were being overworked, kept in chains and denied proper care. Thailand previously reclaimed another elephant it had gifted to Sri Lanka in 2023 over similar concerns. "We will continue to follow veterinarians' advice and implement their recommendations," Jayakodi told reporters on Saturday. *—PTI*

8 killed as jeep plunges into Nepal ravine

KATHMANDU, 25 OCT

Eight people were killed and 10 were injured when a jeep carrying 18 passengers plunged 700 feet down a hillside in western Nepal on Friday night. The accident occurred in the Jharmare area of Rukum West district, approximately 500km west of Kathmandu, as the vehicle travelled from Khalanga to Syalikhadi. Seven victims died at the scene, whilst one succumbed to injuries during hospital treatment. The deceased were aged between 15 and 30 years. Police said preliminary investigations suggest overspeeding caused the crash in Karnali province. The 10 injured passengers are receiving treatment at Rukum's district hospital in Salle. The incident highlights ongoing road safety concerns in Nepal. *—PTI*

Houthis detain two more UN staff in Yemen

UNITED NATIONS, 25 OCT

Houthi rebels have detained two additional United Nations staff members and raided homes of several others in Yemen over the past 48 hours, forcing the world body to reassess its operations in the country. The detentions, confirmed on Friday, bring the total number of detained UN personnel to 55. The armed group has also seized assets and repeatedly occupied UN premises, including facilities in the capital, Sanaa. "These actions are forcing us to reassess the way in which we work in areas controlled by the Houthis," said UN deputy spokesperson Farhan Haqq. The Houthis claim, without evidence, that detained staff are spies, allegations the UN denies. Secretary-General António Guterres has called for their immediate release. *—PTI*

All eyes on Trump at the ASEAN summit

Don to meet Xi; East Timor to join the bloc

KUALA LUMPUR, 25 OCT

Southeast Asian Foreign Ministers open talks Saturday ahead of a landmark ASEAN summit that will formally welcome East Timor as the bloc's 11th member and mark US President Donald Trump's first trip to Asia since returning to the White House.

The meeting serves as a curtain-raiser for the annual Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit which starts on Sunday in Kuala Lumpur, followed by two days of high-level engagements with key partners including China, Japan, India, Australia, Russia, South Korea and the US.

Trump's trip marks his first ASEAN meeting since 2017 and his first journey to Asia in his second term. Officials say Trump is expected to witness new US trade deals, including with Malaysia.

Trump said he would use an upcoming meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping to push for the release of Hong Kong media tycoon Jimmy Lai, after 30 lawmakers wrote to the US President. Top US and Chinese officials also began a meet in Kuala Lumpur to prevent an escalation of their trade war.

Trump said he would like to meet North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

"I would. If you want to put out the word, I'm open to it," the US president told reporters onboard Air Force One as he departed for the region, adding that he "had a great relationship" with Kim.

Leaders are expected to focus on regional security, economic resilience, and maritime disputes — with US tariffs and shifting global trade patterns looming large over discussions.

A separate leaders summit of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership — the world's largest trade bloc encompassing ASEAN and five partners: China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand — will convene for the first time since 2020.

Apart from Trump, Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Japan's newly inaugurated Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi are among more than a dozen leaders attending the ASEAN summit and related meetings.

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa will also participate as new sectoral dialogue partners.

Trump is also expected to preside over the signing of an expanded ceasefire between Thailand and Cambodia, following border clashes between the countries earlier this year.

The ceasefire deal was brokered in Kuala Lumpur in July with ASEAN's support and under Trump's threat to suspend trade negotiations. *—Agencies*

Afghani Defence Minister Maulvi Sahib Muhammad Yaqub Mujahid and Pakistani Defence Minister Khawaja Asif signed a ceasefire agreement during their first meeting in Doha on 19 Oct **PHOTO: DAWN**

Pak, Afghan to hold 2nd round of talks in Turkey

ISLAMABAD, 25 OCT

Pakistan and Afghan officials are set to hold the second round of talks in Turkey on Saturday to find a negotiated solution to the border tensions and curb terrorist activities from Afghan soil, officials said.

The talks follow a temporary restoration of calm along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border after the first round of discussions was held in Doha on 19 Oct. The dialogue was facilitated by Qatar and Turkey, and both sides had agreed to meet again in Istanbul on 25 Oct to continue discussions aimed at addressing mutual security concerns.

Pakistan looks forward to the establishment of a "concrete and verifiable monitoring mechanism... to address the menace of terrorism emanating from Afghan soil towards Pakistan", Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said.

Andrabi reiterated Pakistan's demand for action against the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA).

Pakistan has witnessed a renewed wave of militant attacks since the Taliban takeover of Kabul in 2021. Islamabad has repeatedly urged the Afghan authorities to rein in the TTP militants using Afghan soil to launch attacks inside Pakistan, but with limited success.

This has led to repeated clashes along the 2,611-km-long border, known as the Durand Line, which the Taliban does not officially recognise. *—Agencies*

PKR 500:

Tomato prices skyrocketed from PKR 100 in Pak after the brief border closure

FATF warns Pak against money laundering

PARIS, 25 OCT

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has cautioned Pakistan that its removal from the greylist in 2022 does not make it immune to money laundering or terror financing risks. FATF President Elisa de Anda Madrazo emphasised that all countries, whether on or off the greylist, must maintain strict safeguards against illicit financial activity. Concerns have grown over Pakistan-based terror groups using digital wallets and cryptocurrencies to fund operations.

Meanwhile, North Korea (DPRK), Iran, and Myanmar remain on FATF's blacklist as "high-risk jurisdictions" due to persistent deficiencies in anti-money laundering and counter-terror financing frameworks.

The watchdog urged these countries to implement action plans fully, warning that countermeasures will continue if strategic gaps persist. Iran's incomplete AML/CFT reforms and DPRK's proliferation-related risks were specifically highlighted, while Myanmar must enhance asset management, law enforcement intelligence, and cross-border cooperation.

The FATF's Paris plenary also reviewed the progress of other countries, removing Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Nigeria, and South Africa from the greylist after successful implementation of their action plans.

Madrazo reaffirmed the body's global mission to cut off funding channels for criminals and terrorists, urging governments to strengthen financial oversight and implement reforms. *—Agencies*

US deploys world's largest warship to the Caribbean Sea

The USS Gerald R Ford, the world's largest warship, can carry up to 90 aircrafts **PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA**

CARACAS/WASHINGTON, 25 OCT

The US ordered the world's largest warship to be sent to the Caribbean as Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro has accused Washington of "fabricating a new war".

The USS Gerald R Ford can carry up to 90 aircraft and its deployment marks a massive increase in US firepower in the region, as Washington seeks to increase pressure on "narcoterrorism". Washington has struck at least 10 boats in the Caribbean and the Pacific, killing at least 39 people.

The USS Gerald R Ford carrier "will enhance and augment existing capabilities to disrupt narcotics trafficking and degrade and dismantle transnational criminal organisations", spokesman Sean Parnell said.

"They promised they would never again get involved in a war, and they are fabricating a war," Maduro told state media. He said the US was "seeking a new eternal war."

Meanwhile President Donald Trump is considering plans to target cocaine facilities and drug trafficking routes in Venezuela, shortly after he said he authorised the CIA to operate in the country.

US SANCTIONS COLOMBIAN PREZ, FAMILY

The Trump administration imposed sanctions Friday on Colombian President Gustavo Petro, his family and a member of his government over accusations of involvement in the global drug trade, sharply escalating tensions with the Leftist leader of one of the closest US allies in South America.

The Treasury Department levelled the penalties against Petro; his wife, Veronica del Socorro Alcocer Garcia; his son, Nicolas Fernando Petro Burgos; and Colombian Interior Minister Armando Alberto Benedetti.

Petro responded, saying; "not one step back and never on our knees."

—Salar News with agencies

US will deport Abrego Garcia to Liberia on 31 Oct

The US government plans to deport Kilmar Abrego Garcia to Liberia, and could do so as early as 31 Oct, according to a Friday court filing. The Salvadoran national's case has become a magnet for opposition to Trump's immigration policies since he was mistakenly deported to El Salvador. He was returned to the US in June after the US Supreme Court said the administration had to bring him back.

Govt accepts $130M gift amid shutdown

The Pentagon confirmed that it has accepted an anonymous USD 130 million gift to help pay members of the military during the government shutdown, raising ethical questions after Trump had announced that a friend had offered the gift to defray any shortfalls. The unusual gift amounts to a small contribution toward the billions needed to cover service member paychecks. Trump didn't name the donor but called them "a friend of mine".

TRUMP WON'T MEET CARNEY AS CANADA PULLS AD

WASHINGTON, 25 OCT

US President Donald Trump said he does not plan to meet with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney as Ontario Premier Doug Ford has said he will pause his province's anti-tariff advertisement featuring former president Ronald Reagan.

Asked whether he intended to hold talks with Carney, who will also be in Malaysia during the ASEAN summit, Trump replied, "No, I don't have any plan to."

Trump criticised the actions behind the advertisement, saying, "What they did is really dishonest. And I heard they were pulling the ad. I didn't know they were putting it on a little bit more."

He added, "That's dirty playing, but I can play dirtier than they can." *—PTI*

Russian drone strikes on Ukraine kill four, wound 16

KYIV, 25 OCT

Russian missile and drone attacks on Ukraine overnight into Saturday killed at least four people and wounded 16 others, local officials said.

In the capital, Kyiv, two people were killed and nine were wounded in a ballistic missile attack in the early hours of Saturday, Timur Tkachenko, head of Kyiv's city military administration, said.

"Explosions in the capital. The city is under ballistic attack," Mayor Vitali Klitschko wrote on Telegram during the onslaught.

In the Dnipropetrovsk region, two people were killed and seven wounded, acting regional Gov Vladyslav Haivanenko said.

Ukraine's Air Force said Russia launched nine missiles and 62 drones, of which air defences intercepted four missiles and 50 drones.

In Russia, the country's defence ministry said its air defences shot down 121 Ukrainian drones over Russia overnight.

The attacks came after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged the US to expand sanctions on Russian oil from two companies to the whole sector, and appealed for long-range missiles. He was in London to meet European leaders. *—PTI*

Two people were killed and nine injured in the attacks on Ukrainian capital Kyiv overnight into Saturday **PHOTO: X @ZELENSKYYUA**

SAYS CIA WHISTLEBLOWER

'Pervez handed control of Pak's nukes to US'

CALIFORNIA, 25 OCT

Former CIA officer John Kiriakou said that the US "purchased" former Pakistan president Pervez Musharraf with millions of dollars. He added that former Pakistani prime minister Benazir Bhutto led a lavish life in the Gulf while the common people starved, indicative of how the country was buried under corruption.

"The US loves working with dictators," Kiriakou said. "Because then you don't have to worry about public opinion and you don't have to worry about the media anymore. And so we essentially just purchased Musharraf."

He said that Musharraf then let the US do anything they wanted, including the nuclear arsenal.

Ex-CIA officer John Kiriakou & former Pakistan president Pervez Musharraf **PHOTOS: X**

"We gave millions and millions of dollars in aid, whether it was military aid or economic development aid. And we would meet with Musharraf regularly, several times a week. And essentially he would let us do whatever we wanted to do," he said.

He said that American defence contractors spent millions on Pakistan's ISI.

"I feel that Pakistani groups with an eye towards India benefited because of those American defence contractor monies. Their defense parts were all turned towards India. And I'll add something, we paid tens of millions of dollars in cash as rewards to the Pakistani Intelligence Service. And God knows what they did with that money," he said.

He also said that Al-Qaeda founder Osama Bin Laden escaped from the Tora Bora hills in Afghanistan disguise as a woman and that US wanted to kill Pakistan's nuclear scientist AQ Khan, but Saudi Arabi pressured them not to.

Kiriakou, who spent 15 years in the CIA, half in analysis and the rest in counterterrorism operations, served as the chief of CIA counterterrorism operations in Pakistan in 2002, immediately after the 9/11 attacks. *—ANI*

Thailand's renowned Queen Mother dies at 93

BANGKOK, 25 OCT

Queen Mother Sirikit **PHOTO: X**

Thailand's Queen Mother Sirikit, renowned for her efforts to support rural communities, preserve traditional crafts, and protect the environment, has died at the age of 93, the Royal Household Bureau announced. She passed away on Friday in a Bangkok hospital after suffering a blood infection since 17 October.

Although largely absent from public life in recent years, Queen Sirikit remained a beloved figure. Her portrait was widely displayed across Thailand, and her birthday on 12 August was celebrated as Mother's Day. She married King Bhumibol Adulyadej in 1950, and the couple had four children, including the current King Maha Vajiralongkorn.

During her reign as queen, Sirikit championed numerous social initiatives. In 1976, she launched the SUPPORT foundation, training villagers in silk-weaving, ceramics, and other crafts. Known as the "Green Queen," she also established wildlife conservation projects, forest preservation programmes, and sea turtle hatcheries.

Her work extended beyond charity, bridging urban-rural divides and enhancing the monarchy's relevance during decades of political turbulence. *—PTI*

PHOTO: XXX

NCC bags ₹6.8K cr order from Coal India's arm

NEW DELHI, 25 OCT

NCC Ltd has secured a Rs 6,828.94 crore order from Coal India's subsidiary, Central Coalfields Ltd (CCL), for coal and overburden extraction and transportation at its Jharkhand mining project. In a regulatory filing, NCC said it received a letter of acceptance from CCL on 24 October for work at the Amrapali open-cast project in the Chandragupt area. The contract involves removing 413.59 million cubic metres of overburden, extracting 233.33 million tonnes of coal, and transporting it to Shivpur siding and surface stockyards, with wagon loading of 139.99 million tonnes. NCC will deploy heavy earthmoving machinery for the project. The firm operates across sectors including buildings, transport, water, mining, and railways. *—PTI*

HUDCO, JNPA ally for Rs 5,000 cr infra projects

NEW DELHI, 25 OCT

The Housing and Urban Development Corporation Ltd (HUDCO) has entered into an initial agreement with the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority (JNPA) to collaborate on port infrastructure projects valued at Rs 5,000 crore. In a regulatory filing made on Friday, HUDCO announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with JNPA. "The purpose of this non-binding MoU is to establish and initiate cooperation for exploring collaboration in existing and upcoming infrastructure development and financing & refinancing of port infrastructure projects at JN port for an estimated of Rs 5,000 crore," HUDCO stated. The MoU was signed by Sanjay Kulshrestha, CMD of HUDCO, and Unmesh Sharad Wagh, Chairman of JNPA. *—PTI*

Bharat Rasayan okays 1:1 bonus issue, share split

NEW DELHI, 25 OCT

Agro-chemical firm Bharat Rasayan has approved a 1:1 bonus issue and subdivision of equity shares to improve liquidity and expand its shareholder base. The company said its 41,55,268 equity shares of Rs 10 each will be split into 83,10,536 shares of Rs 5 each. The board also approved an amendment to the capital clause in the Memorandum of Association. The bonus issue, giving one share for every existing share of Rs 5, is subject to shareholder approval, with the record date to be announced later. Delhi-based Bharat Rasayan, active in the pesticides sector, reported a net profit of Rs 140.92 crore and total income of Rs 1,199.02 crore for 2024-25. *—PTI*

CBIC merges 31 customs notifications into 1

NEW DELHI, 25 OCT

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has merged 31 separate Customs Duty notifications into a single document, Notification No. 45/2025, effective from 1 November, 2025. The consolidation retains all existing duty exemptions and benefits but presents them in a structured, unified format, reducing complexity for importers, exporters, and customs officials. Businesses will now refer to this notification to determine applicable duty rates and reliefs. This move forms part of government's ongoing Ease of Doing Business initiatives, coordinated by DPIIT, aimed at simplifying, rationalising, and digitising regulatory processes. It is expected to enhance transparency, consistency, and accessibility of customs information, making compliance easier and reducing stakeholders burden. *—ANI*

LIC refutes Washington Post report on $3.9B Adani deal

Adani's port was seeking to raise around $585B bond issue

NEW DELHI, 25 OCT

On 30 May, the Adani Group had announced that the bond was financed by a single investor – LIC *PHOTO: LIC*

Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) on Saturday said its investments in Adani group companies have been made independently and in accordance with its board-approved policies, following detailed due diligence.

"Department of Financial Services (in the Union Finance Ministry) or any other body does not have any role in such (investment) decisions," LIC said in a statement posted on X.

"The investment decisions are taken by LIC independently as per Board-approved policies after detailed due diligence," LIC said.

"LIC has ensured the highest standards of due diligence and all its investment decisions have been undertaken in compliance with extant policies, provisions in the Acts and regulatory guidelines, in the best interest of all its stakeholders."

Meanwhile, the investigation by Washington Post quoted analysts who viewed the bailout as "evidence of India's deepening corporate-state nexus," arguing that Adani's fortunes have become intertwined with the government's economic narrative.

In its report, The Post claimed: "Debt was piling quickly this spring for **Gautam Adani** – owner of a vast empire of Indian coal mines, airports, seaports and green energy ventures – and the bills were coming due. India' second richest man, whose net worth hovers around $90 billion, had been charged with bribery and fraud last year by US authorities, and several major American and European banks he had looked to for loans were hesitant to help."

The same month, according to The Post, Adani's ports subsidiary was seeking to raise around $585 billion in a bond issue to refinance existing debt. On 30 May, the Adani Group had announced that the bond was financed by a single investor – LIC.

The Post called it "a vivid illustration of Adani's clout within the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, his longtime ally, and of how officials in New Delhi have come to see his empire as central to the country's economic fortunes."

In response, the Adani Group "categorically denied" the allegations, stating that "suggesting preferential treatment for Adani is misleading" and that LIC's investments had generated returns. "LIC invests across multiple corporate groups, implying otherwise is baseless," it said.

The Finance Ministry has not issued an independent response, but officials cited in the Post's report defended the move as part of a broader effort to stabilise domestic capital flows amid international volatility.

Meanwhile, the report also noted that Ravi Nair, one of the journalists behind the investigation, faces a defamation suit filed by the Adani Group over previous reporting for Frontline and The Guardian. *—Agencies*

AFTER RUSSIAN OIL ROW

Meta will hold 30% stake in Reliance's AI venture at ₹855 cr

NEW DELHI, 25 OCT

Meta Platforms, Inc's Facebook Overseas will hold 30 per cent interest in the AI venture floated by billionaire **Mukesh Ambani**'s Reliance Industries, according to a regulatory filing.

Reliance will hold 70 per cent in Reliance Enterprise Intelligence Ltd, the company said in the filing.

Reliance Intelligence, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Reliance Industries Ltd, and Facebook will jointly invest an initial Rs 855 crore in the venture.

In the filing, the company said Reliance Intelligence Ltd on 24 October, 2025 incorporated Reliance Enterprise Intelligence Ltd.

"REIL, incorporated in India as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Reliance Intelligence, will become the joint venture company as per the amended and restated joint venture agreement with Facebook Overseas, Inc. (Facebook), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Meta Platforms, Inc," it said.

REIL will develop, market and distribute enterprise AI services.

"In accordance with the JV Agreement, Reliance Intelligence will hold 70 per cent and Facebook will hold the balance 30 per cent in REIL," it said.

"Reliance Intelligence and Facebook have jointly committed an initial investment of Rs 855 crore."

No governmental or regulatory approvals were required for the incorporation of REIL. *—PTI*

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal during a meeting with President of International for Bank of America Bernard Mensah *PHOTO: PTI*

In Berlin, Piyush woos industry leaders to manufacture in India

BERLIN, 25 OCT

Piyush Goyal, India's Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, engaged with key global leaders during his visit to Berlin. Meeting Morten Wierod, CEO of ABB Group, Goyal highlighted India's rapid advancements in manufacturing and clean energy, stating, "Shared how India's rapid strides in manufacturing, infrastructure, and clean energy present vast opportunities for the group to deepen its partnership with our growth story."

He also held discussions with Bernard Mensah, President of International for Bank of America, focusing on enhancing India-US financial cooperation. Goyal remarked, "Discussed ways to deepen India-US financial cooperation, expand investment and how ongoing reforms and a conducive business environment are strengthening investor confidence in India."

In another critical meeting, Goyal spoke with Valdis Dombrovskis, the EU Commissioner for Economy and Productivity, regarding the India-EU Free Trade Agreement negotiations. He expressed, "We discussed the significant progress in the India-EU Free Trade Agreement negotiations and our commitment to resolving outstanding issues for a balanced and mutually beneficial trade deal."

Additionally, Goyal met Rene Obermann, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Airbus, and shared that Obermann is confident in India's growth story, aiming to enhance partnerships in the aviation sector. *—Agencies*

'Kerala-Germany tie to boost investment, skills collaboration'

T'PURAM, 25 OCT

The Kerala government's meeting with a high-level German business delegation has opened new avenues for cooperation between the state and Germany.

The delegation, led by German Consul General Achim Burkart, described the partnership as a "win-win situation" for both sides.

Speaking on Friday, Burkart said the visit aimed to deepen both business and cultural ties.

"We have brought nearly 30 German entrepreneurs who wish to connect Kerala to Germany and vice versa. Seeing is believing," he said, stressing that direct engagement helps build stronger bilateral understanding and mutual trust.

Burkart noted that collaboration was no longer limited to Keralites working in Germany but also involved German and Kerala companies operating jointly in the state.

He cited DSpace as an example of a German firm expanding operations and creating local employment opportunities.

Highlighting Kerala's skilled workforce, improving infrastructure, and strong educational institutions, Burkart said these factors made the state highly attractive to German investors.

"Wages are lower than in Germany, but the quality of the workforce is very high, so both sides benefit," he observed.

He praised Kerala's infrastructure initiatives.*—ANI*

India seeks e-waste recycling to recover critical minerals

NEW DELHI, 25 OCT

India generates around 1.75 million tonnes of e-waste and 60 kilotonnes of spent LIBs annually *PHOTO: X*

The Ministry of Mines in India is collaborating with the private sector to enhance the nation's e-waste recycling capabilities for recovering essential minerals, as outlined in a recent press release.

This initiative is part of the National Critical Mineral Mission, following the Union Cabinet's approval on 3 September, 2025, of a Rs 1,500 crore incentive scheme aimed at promoting sustainable material recovery through recycling rather than reliance on imports.

On 2 October, 2025, the Ministry released detailed guidelines for the scheme, which includes feedstock such as e-waste, used lithium-ion batteries (LIBs), and automotive catalytic converters.

India generates around 1.75 million tonnes of e-waste and 60 kilotonnes of spent LIBs annually.

The removal of customs duty on LIB scrap is expected to ease imports, expanding recycling opportunities over the next few years.

The initiative includes a formalised Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework, requiring producers to manage e-waste and battery waste collection. The plan also aims to encourage recyclers to extract valuable metals like lithium, cobalt, and nickel and offers incentives for both large and small recycling companies. *—ANI*

TOTAL INCOME OF ₹16,239 CR

Kotak Mahindra Bank Q2 profit declines by 3% to Rs 3,253 crore

NEW DELHI, 25 OCT

Kotak Mahindra Bank has announced a 3 per cent fall in its standalone profit for the second quarter ending 30 September 2025, totalling Rs 3,253 crore, down from Rs 3,344 crore in the same period last year.

The bank's total income rose to Rs 16,239 crore, compared to Rs 15,900 crore a year earlier.

Interest income increased to Rs 13,649 crore, up from Rs 13,216 crore.

The bank reported a 4 per cent growth in Net Interest Income (NII), reaching Rs 7,311 crore, compared to Rs 7,020 crore in the previous year.

However, the Net Interest Margin (NIM) moderated to 4.54 per cent, down from 4.91 per cent at the end of the second quarter last year.

- The bank's total income rose to Rs 16,239 crore, compared to Rs 15,900 crore a year earlier. The bank reported a 4 per cent growth in NII, reaching Rs 7,311 crore, compared to Rs 7,020 crore in the previous year.

The bank effectively reduced its gross Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) to 1.39 per cent of gross loans, down from 1.49 per cent the previous year, while net NPAs also declined to 0.32 per cent from 0.43 per cent.

On a consolidated basis, net profit dipped by 11 per cent to Rs 4,468 crore from Rs 5,044 crore in Q2 FY25. *—PTI*

India set to grow 6.6% in FY26, says IMF

NEW DELHI, 25 OCT

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected that India will remain one of the fastest-growing emerging economies in 2025-26, with growth estimated at 6.6 per cent, according to its latest World Economic Outlook.

The upward revision reflects strong performance in the first quarter, which offset the impact of higher US tariffs on Indian exports.

India is expected to outpace China, whose growth is projected at 4.8 per cent.

However, the IMF predicts a slowdown to 6.2 per cent in 2026 as momentum eases.

Global growth is forecast at 3.2 per cent in 2025, falling slightly to 3.1 per cent in 2026, while inflation is expected to decline overall, though it may remain above target in the United States. *—Agencies*

FROM 15 NOVEMBER

Govt to raise print media ads rate by 26%

NEW DELHI, 25 OCT

The government is working on ways and means to protect conventional media from the disruption caused by new media, and a significant overhaul is in the works, sources said on Saturday.

For print media, the government has decided to increase government advertisement rates by 26 per cent and an appropriate notification for this will be published after 15 November, the sources said.

According to the sources, the government is working at three different levels at a time when the transition of conventional media to new formats is invariably affecting the livelihoods of people, especially those working in traditional media houses.

With the boom of online media platforms, a key revenue stream for traditional print media —advertising— seems to have declined *PHOTO: PTI*

With the boom of online media platforms, a key revenue stream for traditional print media — advertising — seems to have declined.

For radio, the government is exploring ways to remove existing regulatory overhangs that restrict growth, the sources said.

TV channels currently face distortions in the rating system.

Similarly, reforms are also being considered in the DTH sector to maximise reach and make the cost structure for free dish services more efficient.

"A consultation paper on rating reforms has already been completed," they added. *—ANI*

DGCA to probe power bank fire on flight: Naidu

NEW DELHI, 25 OCT

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) will investigate an incident in which a passenger's power bank caught fire onboard a domestic IndiGo flight last week, Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu said on Saturday.

The incident occurred on 19 October while the Dimapur-bound flight was taxiing at Delhi airport. Cabin crew quickly extinguished the fire, preventing any injuries. Responding to PTI, Naidu said the DGCA will conduct a review of the case.

"There are strict norms for carrying electronic devices, especially those with lithium batteries, onboard aircraft. The DGCA is going to take care. They are going to review the incident," he added.

The incident comes amid global concerns over lithium battery fires on planes. Last week, a similar case was reported on an Air China flight from Hangzhou to Seoul, where a lithium battery stored in the overhead compartment caught fire.

The DGCA's review will focus on safety protocols and adherence to regulations for transporting electronic devices on passenger flights. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Sonia Raman becomes 1st Indian WNBA head coach

NEW YORK, 25 OCT

Sonia Raman has made history by becoming the first person of Indian descent to be appointed head coach of the Seattle Storm in the WNBA, as confirmed by sources. Raman previously served as an assistant coach with the New York Liberty after four years with the Memphis Grizzlies. Seattle's decision follows the firing of coach Noelle Quinn post-playoff. "I'm excited for this new challenge," Raman stated. The Storm may see significant changes this season, with several All-Stars set to become unrestricted free agents. Raman's impressive coaching career includes leading MIT to two Division III NCAA Tournament appearances. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Gennady Golovkin runs for World Boxing Presidency

LOS ANGELES, 25 OCT

Former middleweight champion Gennady Golovkin has announced his candidacy for the presidency of World Boxing, the new organisation managing Olympic boxing ahead of the 2028 Los Angeles Games. He faces Mariolis Charilaos, a former head of the Hellenic Boxing Federation. Golovkin is viewed as the frontrunner, having previously spearheaded efforts to repair relations with the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which provisionally recognised World Boxing in February. "I aim to secure boxing's Olympic future and ensure fair opportunities for all athletes," he remarked. The new president will tackle ongoing disputes regarding judging and testing standards. *—PTI*

Hockey India League to kick off on 3 January

NEW DELHI, 25 OCT

The second season of the revived men's Hockey India League will commence in Chennai on 3 January, featuring a match between the Tamil Nadu Dragons and Hyderabad Toofans, organisers announced on Saturday. The tournament will unfold across three cities, culminating in Bhubaneswar on 16 January.

The opening leg will take place at the Mayor Radhakrishnan Hockey Stadium from 3-9 January, followed by the second leg in Ranchi from 11-16 January at the Marang Gomke Jaipal Singh Munda Astro Turf Stadium. The final leg will be held at Kalinga Stadium from 17-26 January.

33 matches are scheduled, with international stars from over 10 countries, including Australia and Belgium. "We expanded the men's league to three different cities to ensure everyone can enjoy,"- said HIL governing committee chairperson Dilip Tirkey on Saturday.*—PTI*

Vintage Ro-Ko school Aussies in Sydney

Rohit's 50th ton, Kohli's knock power India to win

SYDNEY, 25 OCT

Skipper Rohit Sharma struck his 50th international hundred and Virat Kohli produced a vintage, composed knock as India cruised to a nine-wicket victory over Australia in the third ODI at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Saturday.

After Harshit Rana (4/39) led India's disciplined bowling effort to restrict Australia to a modest 236, Rohit (121 not out) and Kohli (74 not out) combined in a 168-run stand to take India to 237 for one in 38.3 overs. Though Australia sealed the three-match series 2-1, the two stalwarts ensured India avoided a whitewash and gave the Sydney crowd a fitting farewell — possibly their last outing together on Australian soil.

Rohit was fluent from the start, driving and flicking Mitchell Starc before taking on spinner Adam Zampa with a slog-sweep and a lofted inside-out six. He reached his 33rd ODI hundred, and 50th international ton overall, in just 105 balls. Kohli, meanwhile, recovered from back-to-back ducks with a masterful innings, rotating strike smartly and dispatching loose deliveries with precision. His fifty came off 56 balls, and he sealed victory with a boundary off Nathan Ellis.

Earlier, Australia began well through Mitchell Marsh (41) and Travis Head, who added 61 for the first wicket. But after Head fell to Mohammad Siraj, India's bowlers tightened the screws. Matt Renshaw (56) and Alex Carey briefly revived the innings with a 54-run stand before falling to sharp Indian fielding, Kohli's reflex catch at backward point and Shreyas Iyer's diving grab were among the highlights.

Spinners Washington Sundar and Kuldeep Yadav applied pressure in the middle overs, while Rana's pace and bounce rattled the Aussies. Renshaw's patient fifty and late cameos could only push Australia to 236.

The day, however, belonged to Rohit and Kohli, two icons scripting another chapter in India's golden era, reminding fans why their partnership remains timeless. *—PTI*

India's Rohit Sharma celebrates his century with Virat Kohli during the third ODI cricket match in Sydney in Australia on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

AUS PLAYERS' HORROR

BCCI to tighten safety for women

INDORE, 25 OCT

- The incident occurred on 23 October when the players, walking towards a café were allegedly followed by a man on a motorcycle.

The BCCI has strongly condemned the alleged stalking and molestation of two Australian women cricketers in Indore, pledging to revisit safety protocols and further tighten security ahead of the World Cup knock-out stage. The board emphasised that player safety remains a top priority and such incidents will not be tolerated.

The incident occurred on Thursday morning when the players, walking towards a café near Khajrana Road, were allegedly followed by a man on a motorcycle. Police said he inappropriately touched one of the players before fleeing. The accused has since been arrested following swift action by local authorities.

BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia called the episode "very condemnable but a stray incident" and praised the Madhya Pradesh police for their prompt action. "We have zero tolerance for such incidents... we assure to revisit our safety protocols if required to further tighten security," he said.

The Madhya Pradesh Cricket Association (MPCA) expressed shock and anguish, apologising to the Australian team. "No woman should ever have to endure such trauma," the association said, noting the disorderly act "cast a shadow over the city's image."

The Australian players immediately contacted their security officer, who coordinated with local authorities. Assistant Commissioner Himani Mishra recorded statements and registered an FIR under sections relating to outraging a woman's modesty and stalking.

The MPCA lauded the police for swiftly apprehending the accused but stressed examining whether the players had requested security for movements outside the hotel. Itreiterated its solidarity with the players and assured support to the probe. *—PTI*

Verstappen eyes Mexico win to seal F1 title

MEXICO CITY, 25 OCT

Max Verstappen needs to keep closing the gap on McLaren's Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris to stay in contention for a fifth consecutive F1 title, and racing in Mexico City might help. The Red Bull driver topped Friday's second practice session with a time of 1 minute, 17.392 seconds, ahead of Ferrari's Charles Leclerc and Mercedes' Kimi Antonelli. Norris finished fourth whilst Piastri struggled in 12th place.

Verstappen has won five races in Mexico, including three of the last four. He's coming off a victory at the United States Grand Prix in Austin last weekend, part of a surge that has seen him reduce leader Piastri's advantage from 104 points to 40 over the last four races. He trails Norris by 26 points. "To be honest with you, to still be in this fight is very surprising," Verstappen said "We need to be perfect...." *—PTI*

WOMEN WORLD CUP

India to iron out flaws in clash with B'desh

Victory over Kiwis secured India's semi-final berth, powered by centuries from Smriti Mandhana and Pratika Rawal *PHOTO: PTI*

NAVI MUMBAI, 25 OCT

- Their rain-affected victory over New Zealand secured India's semi-final berth, powered by centuries from Smriti Mandhana and Pratika Rawal and a 76 from Jemimah Rodrigues

India will use their final Women's World Cup group stage match against Bangladesh on Sunday as a crucial opportunity to prepare for the semi-finals. With their fourth-place finish in the league already confirmed, the hosts aim to "iron out flaws" and build confidence under match conditions.

Their rain-affected victory over New Zealand secured India's semi-final berth, powered by centuries from Smriti Mandhana (105) and Pratika Rawal (122), alongside a brisk 76 from Jemimah Rodrigues. While the win was commanding, Rawal's 63 dot balls highlighted areas for improvement, particularly against stronger opponents in the knockout stage. The team will focus on improving strike rotation and acceleration in pressure scenarios.

Captain Harmanpreet Kaur's form remains under scrutiny, with her 70 against England the only significant score of the tournament. Sunday's fixture offers her a chance to regain rhythm and set the tone for the semis, while younger batters can also gain crucial confidence.

The bowling attack, led by Renuka Singh Thakur, performed well under scoreboard pressure but will also look to gain experience in dew conditions, with moderate rain and thunderstorms forecast. Richa Ghosh, recovering from a finger injury, could provide additional firepower in the lower order.

Bangladesh, eliminated after a narrow defeat to Sri Lanka, will finish last in the tournament. For India, this match is less about the result and more about tactical refinement, testing different strategies. *—PTI*

England seeks batting rhythm against 'Kiwis'

VISAKHAPATNAM, 25 OCT

England will face New Zealand in their final Women's World Cup league match on Sunday, aiming to find batting consistency and refine their game ahead of the knockout stages. Having already secured a semi-final berth, Nat Sciver-Brunt's team will use the match to work on middle-order frailties, improve under pressure, and allow batters to regain confidence after inconsistent performances earlier in the tournament.

The four-time champions have shown flashes of brilliance, including a 10-wicket win over South Africa in Guwahati, but have also suffered batting collapses and made simple run chases unnecessarily tense. Their vulnerability to inswing bowling was exposed by Pakistan's Fatima Sana, who claimed four wickets to restrict England to 133/9 before rain intervened. Heather Knight has been a reliable performer, while Sciver-Brunt, Sophia Dunkley, and Amy Jones have struggled to make substantial contributions consistently.

New Zealand, already eliminated and affected by rain throughout the tournament, arrive following a heavy loss to India, with skipper Sophie Devine carrying most of the batting responsibility. The White Ferns will like to end the campaign on a high. *—PTI*

Lakshya leads India to U-17 championship

CHENGDU, 25 OCT

Lakshya Rajesh produced a thrilling comeback to defeat top seed Lalita Sattayathadakoon, spearheading five Indians into the semi-finals of the Badminton Asia U-17 & U-15 Championships.

After losing the first game 11-21, Lakshya rallied to claim the next two 21-16, 21-19 in the U-17 girls' singles quarterfinals. Sixth seed Diksha Sudhakar also progressed convincingly, defeating Indonesia's Raisya Affatunisa 21-17, 21-8 to secure her semifinal spot.

In the boys' singles, Jagsher Singh Khangurra continued his fine form with a straight-game 21-13, 21-14 win over Hong Kong's Zhan Shing Yui.

India's Jangjeet Singh Kajla and Jananika Ramesh advanced to the U-17 mixed doubles semifinals following the retirement of their Chinese opponents.

Meanwhile, top seed Shaina Manimuthu eased into the U-15 girls' singles semifinals, overcoming Japan's Yubuki Azumaya 21-14, 21-16, ensuring a strong Indian presence across multiple categories in the match. *—PTI*

Lakshya Rajesh *PHOTO: PTI*

Cricket Australia had contacted the Pakistan Cricket Board about the issue and that the seven contracted Pakistani players would play *PHOTO: PTI*

Pak stars to play in BBL after stalemate resolved

SYDNEY, 25 OCT

Pakistan's top cricketers are expected to play in this year's Big Bash League after Cricket Australia reportedly resolved a last-minute standoff with the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB). The PCB last month suspended all no-objection certificates for players wanting to compete in overseas T20 leagues, a decision that came just a day after Pakistan's Asia Cup final defeat to India in the UAE. The move threatened to derail the BBL season, with seven of the eight clubs having signed Pakistani players, including potential participants like Babar Azam, Shaheen Shah Afridi and Muhammad Rizwan.

However, Australian journalist Tom Morris told SEN Radio that Cricket Australia has successfully negotiated with the PCB to allow the players to participate. "About three weeks ago the Pakistan Cricket Board emailed agents of star players to tell them no objections certificates would be on hold," Morris said. "This rocked the Big Bash, it rocked Cricket Australia."

Morris confirmed that Cricket Australia had contacted the PCB about the issue and received clarification that the seven contracted players would be permitted to play in the tournament. The exact details of how the impasse was broken have remain unclear so far. *—PTI*

MESSI SCORES TWICE AS INTER MIAMI BEAT NASHVILLE IN PLAYOFF OPENER

FORT LAUDERDALE, 25 OCT

Lionel Messi lifted the Golden Boot, then delivered on the pitch, scoring twice as Inter Miami opened their Major League Soccer playoffs with a 3-1 win over Nashville SC in the Eastern Conference first-round series on Friday night.

Messi struck first with a diving header in the 19th minute and sealed the victory in stoppage time, while Tadeo Allende added another with a header from a Messi-assisted move. Nashville's Hany Mukhtar pulled one back from a free kick in the 101st minute — the game's final play.

The victory capped a milestone week for Inter Miami, following the announcement of Messi's three-year contract extension. "Leo has reset the trajectory for Major League Soccer," said MLS Commissioner Don Garber, who presented Messi with the Golden Boot before the match.

Messi, last season's MVP and favourite to win again, finished the regular season with 29 goals and 19 assists, just one contribution shy of the league record.

His presence has doubled Inter Miami's valuation to an estimated USD 1.2 billion and boosted MLS attendance and jersey sales to record highs. Game 2 will be played in Nashville in US on 1 November. *—PTI*

DELAY AFTER DELAY

Messi's Kochi match postponed as FIFA nod still pending

KOCHI, 25 OCT

The much-anticipated visit of the Argentina football team, led by Lionel Messi, to Kerala has been postponed due to a delay in securing FIFA approval, officials confirmed on Saturday.

Event sponsor Anto Augustine, who had earlier announced that the World Cup champions would play a friendly match in Kochi on 17 November, said the fixture has been deferred after discussions with the Argentine Football Association (AFA). "Considering the delay in receiving FIFA's permission, it has been decided to postpone the match from the November window. The new date will be announced soon," he said in a Facebook post.

Kerala Sports Minister V Abdurahiman said Argentina's visit depends entirely on FIFA's approval. "They are playing in Angola, but no announcement has been made about the second match. All required documents for FIFA approval were submitted on Friday night," he said.

The minister added that the match could still take place this month if FIFA clears it immediately. "If approval doesn't come through now, it will be held during the next international window," he noted.

Inspections at Kochi's Jawaharlal Nehru International Stadium have been completed. The venue's halogen lights are being upgraded, and fire and safety audits are done, he said. FIFA may grant approval based on the current arrangements.

Abdurahiman also revealed that Thiruvananthapuram's stadium was rejected due to poor pitch conditions. "AFA representatives were satisfied with Kochi's facilities, but emails from certain individuals in Kerala raised concerns and delayed the process," he alleged. He added that while Messi could have visited alone, the government preferred hosting a full-team match. The full Argentina team was needed. *—PTI*